BLUE BOOK

Magazine of Adventure for MEN, by MEN ★ MARCH 25 c

This Is Our Land
III—The Birth of a Nation
Painted by HERBERT MORTON STOOPS

High Iron *by FRANK BONHAM*
A Complete Novel

Boy with a Left *by JOEL REEVE*

The Nobleman and the Ugly Barmaid
by H. BEDFORD-JONES

Do Yanks Kid Themselves About Hating War?*

by JIM G. LUCAS

ON a recent Sunday in a small church in upstate New York the minister said: "The men who fought this war don't glory in it. They hate war."

That's what we say. That's what we think we mean. But it isn't true. We are more war-minded than we know. I asked myself:

"Do I hate war?" And I had to answer: "I don't." I had to go on from there. I may secretly love war.

Self-examination shocked me. I suddenly was aware of something I hadn't known about myself. I had always taken for granted I hated war. Now I don't know.

War is ugliness. War is death. War is destruction. War is heartbreak and sorrow.

The men who fight wars, when they fight them, hate war. They hate its blood and carnage. They hate its grime and filth. They hate its demands on their bodies. They hate its regimentation. They hate its separations. They hate its standing in line for chow, wearing its uniforms, taking its orders.

But when wars are over, day after day, that's easier to forget. You don't forget the other side of war.

You don't forget that in war you found the only Christian brotherhood you ever knew. You don't forget that in war you found complete selflessness. You don't forget learning in war that a man could love the other fellow more than himself, if only for a minute, an hour, a day. You don't forget that in war you saw men who loved life give their lives for you.

I didn't know that kind of living before I went to war. I haven't known it since. I miss it. The absence of it, the brutal contradiction of it in peace makes it the harder to forget.

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Photo by Milton J. Pike

Ex-Marine Lt. Jim G. Lucas fought in the Pacific war from Guadalcanal to Iwo Jima. He saw his share of the bloody side of the war. Here he tells also of the other phase of war, indulges in some soul-searching and draws some conclusions.

WE have returned to a world at peace. It is a world of dog-eat-dog. Probably it has always been like this. Probably it hasn't changed much. Probably we haven't, either. Because we've taken up our places in this world. We are living by its rules.

But not particularly liking it. We can't forget that once we knew—and were—men who lived and died by other rules.

Living on that plane for an hour, I am dissatisfied with anything less. William James says the world, in peace, must find the moral equivalent for war. Lacking that, peace is inadequate. Lacking that, peace produces nostalgia for war.

If, in the long run, we're going to do anything about it, our task is at once simple and staggering. We've got to forge a world of peace out of the same steel we forge a world at war. We've got to find William James' moral equivalent. It's insane that war should bring out our best qualities and peace our worst. And yet it's true.

I suspect that more of the millions who fought this war feel that way than admit it, even to themselves.

OUR national policy and public utterances don't always reflect our psychology. We overstate. We place too much emphasis on our instincts for peace, not enough on our love of war. We persuade other nations we are pushovers, when we aren't. That we'll make any concession for peace—peace at any price—when we won't.

It happened in this war. We fooled Germany and Japan. We convinced them we didn't want to fight because we talked and acted like men who didn't want to fight.

Then we tore into them, and thousands of World War I veterans—men who should hate war if what we've been telling ourselves is true—flocked back to war. It was almost as if they were trying to escape from peace. Nostalgia bred of the first war drew bankers from their banks, judges from their benches, farmers from their farms.

There may even be a moral to it. Certainly, a national preparedness program and a foreign policy based on frank recognition that we're not as peace-loving as we say, which admits we're not afraid to fight—could even like to fight—might have dissuaded our enemies in both wars.

It's dangerous not to know our own minds. It's dangerous to go on piously telling the world we're 100 per cent peaceful, when we aren't. Twice in a generation we've proved we're not even a neutral-minded people when there's a first-rate scrap going on. Let's quit kidding ourselves.

Readers' Comment

From a Coast Guardsman

AS a constant and faithful reader of your magazine for the past five years, I want to mention that now the reading matter is fully appreciated—that is, since my entry into this hospital. Although I'll admit the war stories in your magazine are very good, I think that more stories of other types of adventure would be appreciated by all.

I consider BLUE BOOK *a most outstanding magazine because of its lack of advertisements, and doing without the familiar phrase 'continued on page—' This has proved a helpful matter while reading, for a story is enjoyed much more, and there is less confusion.*

Joseph Rydell, RM 3/C U.S.C.G.

The First to Ask for Advertisements

THE clearness of expression attained by the writers of the stories and features in BLUE BOOK *has long been a source of great pleasure to me. The large clear type faces and the excellent typographical work h s, no doubt, contributed much to this effect.*

Therefore I was not surprised when I learned that many other people had had the same experience. In fact, I found some of them always referred to BLUE BOOK *as "The Easy-reading Magazine." I further learned that this was the only magazine they read regularly.*

In view of this it seems to me that if a limited amount of advertising were carried, its insertion would be a real service to these people, as well as a source of additional income for the publishers.

J. A. Litherland.

Gelett Burgess Has Fun with us—and is Caught in the Act

YOUR readers and Mr. Gelett Burgess should enjoy this letter. His story "The Man Who Lived Backward" was written in supposedly serious vein but Burgess gave the lie to it all the way through by his use of names. He admitted anagramming with the name *Levi,* but left the detection of other names to the reader. In the order of their appearance:

Dr. Kojer: *Joker.* Mrs. Keaf: *Fake.* Levi Wicet: *Live Twice,* and he did. Dr. Santa: *Satan;* also known as Elvid: *Devil.* Phyno Wicet: *Phony Twice.* Rial Keaf: *Fake Liar.* Monsieur Dirth Salia: *Third Alias.* Eli Busgo: *Bogus Lie.* Count Lei Felsa: *False Lie.* Eli Drauf: *Lie Fraud.* That's all for the story.

Now for the author, Gelett Burgess. *Buggs-e Letters.*

And I defy you to do it to me.

Jack Luzzatto.

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This Is our Land No. 3—The Birth of the Nation

Except for articles and stories of Real Experience, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence

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Boy with a Left

Box-fighting is not always good clean sport—especially when big money is involved; and a boy's life itself may hang on his conduct in the ring.

by JOEL REEVE

WILLY BOULDER poised his square face over the white paper and scowled. The hall bedroom in the Village was chilly, and he blew on his fingers. Then he began to write:

December 24th, 1933.

Dear Miss Sue:

We are fine. How are you? We have been in New York some time, now, haven't we? Pat has made me go to school nights, and I am learning many things. You know me. I hate school, but Pat says to be a champ, you got to go to school.

Pat is a fine fellow. We are not in with the mains, as they call them here in New York, but we get a fight in Jersey once in a while. I lose one or two, but I win plenty, too. Pat teaches me everything about boxing, and if I was not so thick, I guess we would be doing better. Of course we are doing good. We live in a nice place downtown—

His hand was cramped and numb with cold. He blew on it some more and stared at the soiled wallpaper. Well, he could not tell Sue Faye the truth. She did not have a great respect for the fight game anyhow, and if she knew about the mobs and the bootleggers' pals and the big shots around the Garden, she would want him to come back to Midburgh and the grocery, and go to school there, he was sure of that.

The door opened, and Pat Hafey came in, and Willy said: "Hiya, champ? What's new?"

Pat said: "Don't call me champ. I never was a champ." His blond hair was receding more every week, and the little bunches of cartilage over his blue eyes wrinkled in displeasure. Pat was often unhappy these days, but Willy knew why, and just sympathized with him. Pat had been a great boxer in his day—he had fought every champion from Leonard to Canzoneri and never lost a bout. He had never won from them—always got a draw; but they never beat him, and it irked him not to be able to go any more.

Willy said: "We got anything?"

"Not anything we want," said Hafey. He put his hand in his pocket, then pulled it out quickly because his pocket was empty.

Willy said: "I was writin' to Sue Faye."

The brows knitted closer. "Yeah? Saying what, for instance?"

Willy said: "Oh, you don't need to worry, Pat. I wouldn't tell her the mob's got us down. We'll make a stake an' get out o' town and hit the road. . . . What you got that we don't want, Pat?"

The older man hesitated. He had found it better to be straight out with the kid. They had been together almost a year now; and although Willy lacked schooling, he had a native shrewdness which had more than once amazed Pat Hafey. It was—intuition, Hafey thought; almost like a woman's. Like Sue—

He said: "They'll give us Jack Parr, at St. Joe's Friday night."

"Parr? That new guy?" Willy scratched his round, hard head. "He's in with the mains, aint he?"

"'*Isn't*' he," Hafey said. "If you don't watch your grammar, Sue will catch on that you're setting up pins at night instead of going to school."

Willy said: "Jack Parr—he's the left-hand artist. He stabs off their heads. Manny Gold has got him. They are getting him ready to fight Canzoneri, and then maybe Ross for the title."

"You know all about it," said Hafey.

"They would pay us plenty," said Willy.

"To take a beating," said Hafey.

Willy stared at the wall. Pat knew, all right. This Parr, he had class; he was a year ahead of Willy. There was no doubt about it. And Pat simply would not let Willy go against boys who were a year ahead of him. That way lay ruination. When you started a fight career, you fought boys even with you in experience; and then if you lost, that was your fault. Pat was strictly honest about that. Pat was always on the level with everybody. Still—Willy wished he could fight Jack Parr for maybe six, seven hundred. It would move them out of this crummy joint, give them a start.

He turned hopelessly back to his letter. There was a knock on the door, and a special-delivery letter was delivered. Willy added a few cheerful words and sealed his epistle to Midburgh. He turned to see that Pat was reading the special, and Pat's face was white.

"What happened?"

"It's from Sue," said Pat. He dropped it on the table. He sat in a chair and stared straight at Willy, his head up, his eyes afraid. "She is coming here. On a New Year's vacation. She thinks we will throw her a party. She believes all that guff you are always writing her."

Willy said: "She's coming—to see us? To see you?"

"She believes in us. For a time she did not believe in me," said Hafey. "But you convinced her."

Willy said: "Hey—you aint sore at me, are you?"

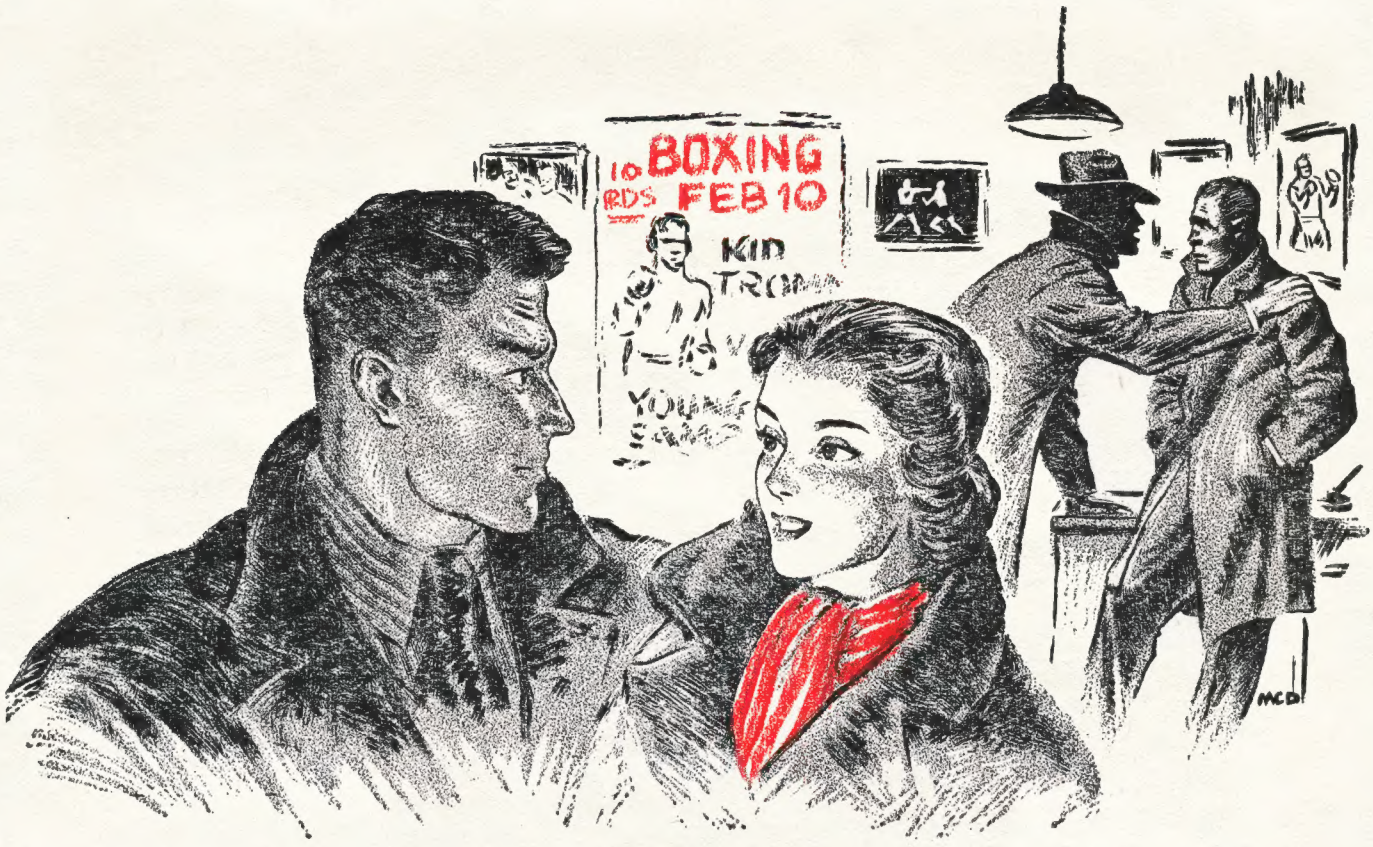
"Sore at you?" Hafey's face broke up into soft lines, his eyes misted. "Why, kid, you're—you're fine. A little more time, that's all. I want you on the top, kid, and not the hard way. If they'd let me pick your opponents, let us fight—" He paused, turning his mind inward, in a mannerism familiar to Willy. He said nothing while Willy took another sheet of paper and wrote quickly upon it and put it in the envelope to Sue Faye back in Midstate. He had to unstick the flap, and it was quite a job; but it was a stamped envelope, and money was very tight. There was a new President in Washington, but money still was tight, he knew. Truthfully, Willy had never known when money was not tight, so it did not bother him as much as some others—like his friend Pat. He knew Pat had made a lot of money—and spent it; but money did not mean much to Willy.

He said: "I'll mail this—"

"Wait," said Hafey. "We can't let her find us here. We'll have to do something."

Willy said: "Sure. We got a week. We'll do something."

"Tell her we're going out of town—" Hafey stared at his protégé. "We can't do that, can we?"



Willy took Sue aside and listened to her praise, but with one ear he heard every word between Pat and Martini

"No," said Willy. "'Sides, I'd like to see Sue, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," Hafey breathed. "I'd—like—to see her."

"All right," said Willy. "We'll fix it." He put on his overcoat, which was new and warm. Pat had bought it for him, and Pat never took any chances with Willy's health. Pat's own coat was camel's-hair and swagger, but it was not for midwinter.

DOWN on the street the wind was blowing; Willy walked fast. He posted the letter and kept right on, past the corner drugstore, foregoing his customary hot chocolate, down to the electric sign which proclaimed that the NONPAREIL BOWLING ALLEYS were within.

He hung up his coat and went over to the desk. Bo Martini was picking his teeth and staring at th empty alleys. He said: "You're early, Boulder."

"I want to talk to you," said Willy.

"No dough in advance," said Martini. "Whyn't you get a fight and make a decent dollar?" Martini was not being caustic; he was genuinely curious. Willy had been watching him for a couple of months now, and had made up his mind about Martini. The young Italian owned the bowling alleys outright and had plenty of ability. His connections with the underworld were notorious, but to Willy he seemed fair and honest.

"I can get a fight. With Jack Parr at St. Joe's."

Martini delicately removed the toothpick, stared at its end. He said: "Oh! I see."

Willy said: "I'd fight him, but Pat says not."

"Uh-huh," said Martini. "I unnerstan'."

Willy said: "Look, Bo. What if I beat Parr?"

Martini said: "You can't beat one side of him. But if you should happen to meet him—don't beat him. Manny Gold's got him."

"I'm ketchin' on to them—those things," said Willy. He had a terrible time watching his grammar. He must remember when Sue came. . . . Thought of Sue drove him on. "Look, Bo, you don't like Gold's mob. I heard you say so."

Martini said: "You're gonna hear too much with them big ears some day, kid."

"Put it like this," Willy said: "I work for you. Gold knows it. Supposin' I signed for Parr and beat him. Would you stand for Gold and his mob to kick me around?"

Martini said: "Why you young punk!" He dropped the toothpick into a convenient cuspidor. He started to walk away. Then he paused, looking out the window of the NONPAREIL BOWLING ALLEYS, at the gay electric sign. The first of his abundant trade began to come in. He reached out and touched the cold window glass.

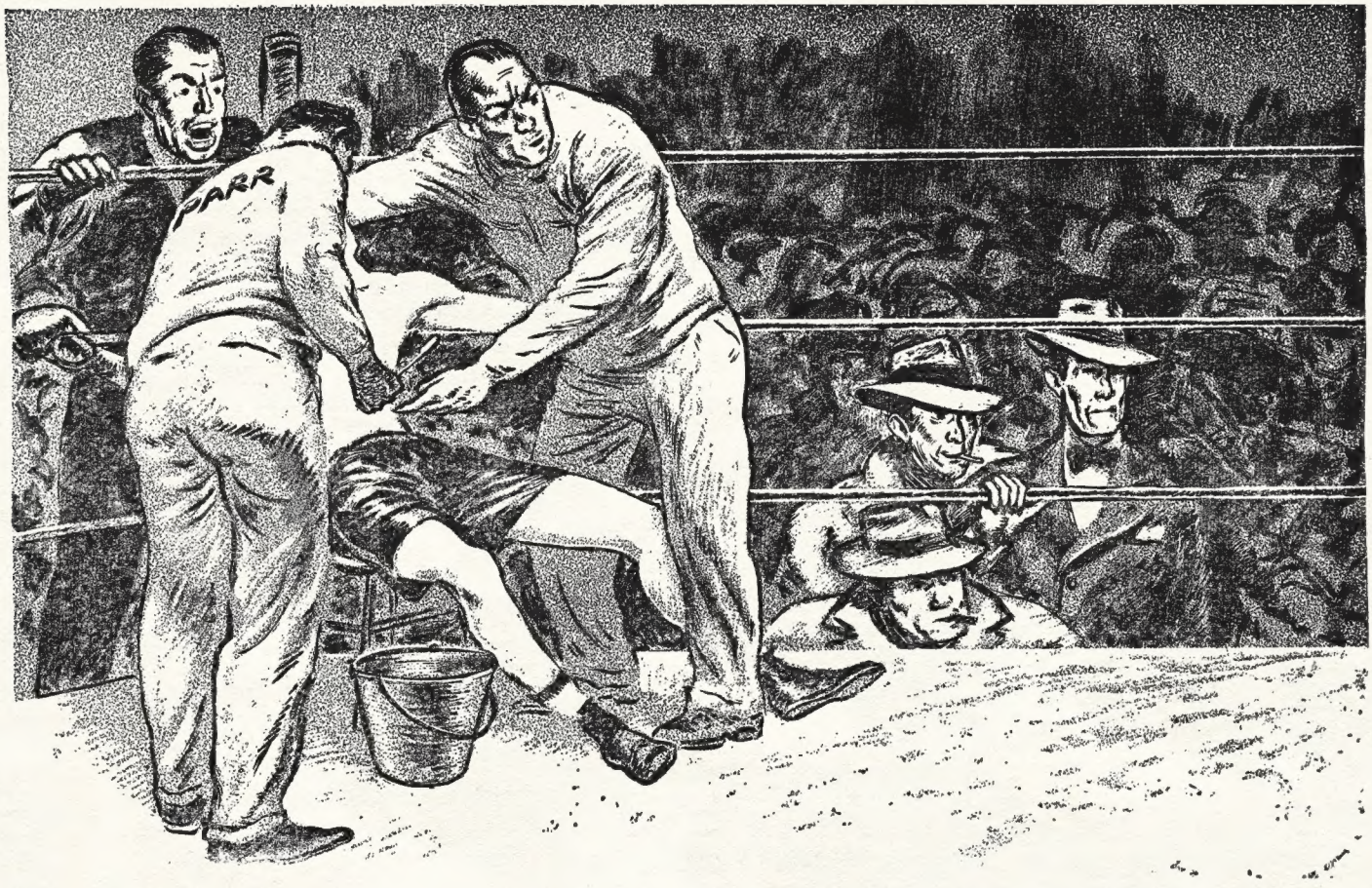
He came back to where Willy still stubbornly waited. He said: "What you got on your mind, you young jerk?"

"Makin' a decent dollar," said Willy. "Without a bunch of hoods movin' in and takin' it away from me. I'm just a country boy, Bo."

"So am I," said Martini slowly. "Old country—but now I'm an American. I was born here, anyways. Manny Gold is big, Willy. Plenty big. . . . Look, Willy, you go sit in my office. You don't rack up no pins no more. I want to talk to you."

Waiting for Bo Martini, Willy shivered a little. He had heard plenty of talk of racketeers since coming to New York. In fact, he had heard little else. The fight game, he knew, was smeared by them. Pat Hafey, fiercely refusing to play ball with them, had been a gone goose from the start.

He thought of Sue Faye, and of Pat Hafey, and it seemed to his anxious mind that they were growing old. Willy was eighteen, himself. Sue and Pat had been apart enough, through misunderstanding and Pat's careless ways. If this thing went wrong, they might be parted forever, and that was more than Willy would be able to stand. They belonged together, and that newspaper sports writer, Woodsy Woods, back in Midburgh, was hot after Sue; and if Pat did not come through with a nice New Year's party—or something—Sue might go back and fall into Woodsy's arms. Willy had heard of such things, listening to his elders talk.



"Willy . . . you don't dare, Willy . . . It's your life,

They met in promoter Abe Hayman's office, Pat Hafey, Manny Gold and their two fighters. Hayman waved his hands with pleasure and said: "You unnastan' how it is, Hafey. You get a flat guarantee against a percentage—say ten per cent."

"Fourteen," said Hafey. His face was grim, and he could not conceal his dislike of the hairy fat man who promoted at St. Joe's; nor of oily Manny Gold, a beak-nosed predatory man with bad breath.

"I said ten!" Hayman's voice rose.

"Fourteen against a thousand," said Pat Hafey.

"Six hunnert against ten, yet!" screamed Hayman.

Manny Gold said: "Give 'im what he wants. We make ours. Give the bum anything. We need the fight for the records." He smirked at his fighter, and suddenly Willy knew something. He knew that this Manny Gold was a slob, a manager who functioned by virtue of his "in" with the mobs, a bum who knew all but nothing about boxing.

Jack Parr seemed a silent guy by nature. He had a low brow, black, bristling hair, a thick nose. But he was without scars over the eyes, which meant he was a boxer. He was not so chunky as Willy, who had not reached his full height as yet. Parr was lean and long-armed, with grace in his motions. Willy stared at Parr for a long time, saying nothing, while Pat Hafey won his point against Hayman, and Gold sneered at everyone.

Hayman said: "So you're a sharpie, so you'll get your ears pinned back, who cares? G'wan, g'wan, get out o' here!"

They went out, leaving Gold to connive with the promoter. They went down to the Manhattan, where they had moved their luggage. Willy had arranged for that. It doesn't cost anything to move into a decent apartment hotel, he pointed out. It's moving out, that costs the money. So here they were set up in style.

Pat Hafey looked around the living-room of their suite and said: "She'll be here any minute."

"That's good," said Willy. "I sure will be glad to see her."

Pat said: "You should be over at Stillman's, training."

Willy laughed. "I am going to the gym. You're so nervous, Pat."

The phone rang, and Hafey jumped a foot. Willy answered it, and said: "Miss Sue! Come up! It's all right—we got a livin'-room."

He was in the hall to meet her. She was very pretty in her warm coat with the fur collar and a perky hat, and her slim, lovely legs and ankles. She was home town, but she was a big-town girl. She said: "Well, youngster, you haven't changed a bit. Still without a final 'g' to your name."

She kissed him, on the mouth, and he saw tears in her eyes, and all of a sudden he was gulping and hanging onto her a little, like a puling kid, just holding onto her and loving her. She had been the greatest influence in his life; she had been his entire family since he was fifteen and orphaned. She had introduced him to Pat Hafey and given him his chance. . . .

He managed to say: "Go ahead inside and see Pat." He had his coat stashed near the door, and he got only one glimpse of them standing face to face, both a little pale, the tears still in Sue's eyes; then he had the coat and was going. He only heard Sue say: "I'm so proud of Willy—the way he is making good. I know you'll make a champion of him, Pat."

HE ran all the way to Stillman's. It was a mile, but he held the coat over his arm and trotted. In New York you could do that, and nobody stared. He went upstairs and undressed, and slugged the heavy bag and patted the light bag, and did his exercises.

A colored boy named Atkins offered to box with him, a fast welterweight. Atkins said: "Yo' gonna fight Parr. You can't win, huh?"

Willy guessed it was worse for Kid Atkins than for himself. He said: "I aint sayin'. Let's box."

kid." . . . Willy said: "Get out o' my way at the bell."

They climbed into one of the rings. Atkins was very good, better than anyone Willy had ever boxed, he learned at once. He took a good pummeling from Atkins, particularly from his left. They went two rounds.

Coming out for the third, Willy's inner sensitivity to things pugilistic made him change his style a bit. He let the snaky left curl over his shoulder, threw a right inside. He was thinking so hard about defense that he forgot about the way his right had been developing lately, a thing he had only half noted, truthfully.

The punch landed over the heart of the colored boy. Atkins dropped his hands. He staggered backward, into the ropes, his eyes rolling.

Willy stopped his left, said: "Hey! I'm sorry!"

From below, a harsh voice said: "Okay, okay, stop d' clownin' and git out o' d' ring. 'At's enough for you bums."

It was Manny Gold, with Beagle, the trainer, and Jack Parr. Parr was glaring at Atkins, Willy saw. The colored boy was gasping for breath.

Willy said calmly: "I pay to train here the same as you. Wait your turn."

Gold's voice rose. "You gonna give *me* an argyment?"

Willy said: "Why not? Who do you think you are—Legs Diamond?"

Gold wheeled and walked away, toward the office. Parr stared from Atkins to Willy. The colored boy walked weakly over and said: "I got to quit, Willy. 'At was an awful right. 'At 'bout finish me fo' today."

Willy said: "Okay, if you say so, kid." He climbed through the ropes and said conversationally, making sure Parr could hear: "I'll take that bum the same way. He's a sucker for an inside right."

He went down and dressed, fearful now at his own temerity. He had been warned time and again about bucking the mains. Manny Gold was wired in all the way to the top. The bootlegging money which was behind Gold and Parr and the others who were "in" was a fantastic pile, running to millions. No one, not even the kings of olden days, threw money around like the bootleg czars. There was talk that Capone's fabulous fortune was partly in the fight game in Gotham, that Capone's killers would come and get you if you stuck out your neck.

He went thoughtfully back to the apartment. He was only a kid, and maybe he was doing wrong. But his hand had been forced by the appearance of Sue Faye. . . .

He had seen Pat Hafey come to town, full of confidence, trying to do things the decent, honorable way, trying to work Willy, a prelim of the rawest order, into spots where he could learn without being martyred. He had seen Pat try to pick up some other good boys, so that a decent living could be made by all while Pat taught them all that he had learned during his great career. The newspapers had lauded Hafey's retirement to handle other fighters, referring to it as "a great credit and addition to the beak-busting business." But there had been no recruits, and Pat had been rebuffed on every side—because he would not hook up with the mains.

The past year had almost broken Pat Hafey, Willy knew. There were little signs. The old confidence and snap were going. Pat had even been afraid to see Sue. Pat was now—Willy counted on his fingers—thirty-three. He had never been married, never had a home, a comfortable corner he could call his own. Willy was eighteen; but he meant to have a place to hang his hat some day. It was no good, living like they did.

He went into the apartment, and there was a note. "We are dining at Luchow's. Come on down."

Willy grinned and put his coat back on, and went down to the corner drugstore and had a blue plate and hot chocolate and some ice-cream. Then he went over to the NONPAREIL alleys for a while. He sort of kept his fingers crossed. Sue looked so pretty—maybe Pat would snap out of it.

Although, he worried, this was just a stop-gap. The money from the Parr fight wouldn't much more than start them. How could Pat support Sue if Willy lost to Parr, and they had to start over? It would mean hitting the sticks, one-night stands, far from New York, where the big money lay. He worried about this until bedtime. Pat hadn't shown up, which was a good sign, but Willy had a little trouble getting asleep, for the first time in his life. . . .

Sue's visit passed very quickly. It was like a lot of quick flashes in a movie. Sue was radiant, and Pat took her everywhere. Pat never let down, once Sue was with them. Willy gave him full credit for that. He was the old debonair man of the world, full of smart cracks, gay and laughing. The three of them laughed a lot in those days together, through a holiday season.

Willy boxed every day with Kid Atkins, and the colored boy was the most helpful partner he ever had. Nobody else would spar with him, because he was going against one of the mob's fighters. The Negro had nothing to lose, being worse off than Willy. He said after their last workout: "Wisht I had a manager—any ol' manager. Nobody wants me."

Willy said: "How you make a living, kid?"

"I don't," said Atkins. "Run errands in Harlem. Gits me a room from a woman. Eats when I kin."

Willy said: "Heck, you can have a manager. Pat'll take you on. You're a good welter, kid."

THEY drew up a contract that night; the Kid was to be in Willy's corner. Pat was skeptical, but Pat was so busy with Sue that he scarcely knew what he was doing. Just before they went down to St. Joe's, Pat came into the apartment and stared at Willy and said: "I've done it."

"When you gettin' married?" Willy asked happily.

"We'll be broke. We can't even have a home. She's going back to Midburgh. But we're getting married tomorrow."

Willy said: "Pat, suppose I beat Parr? For you and Sue?"

"You can't," said Pat softly. "I feel like a dog. . . . They came to me. They said you couldn't beat him. They saw you throw a right at someone—"

"Atkins," nodded Willy. "I clunked him."

Pat said painfully: "I have to tell you, Willy. You don't quite understand. They've got gunmen. You read about these things in the paper—how people turn up in the river—or not at all—just disappear. Willy, it could happen to you or me. . . . They are readying Parr for the big time. He needs some fights on his record. . . . That's how we got the chance. But you can't win."

"They keep tellin' me that," Willy nodded.

"After this one, we go West. We'll take Atkins—that was a good deal you put over there, and I'm not forgetting it. I'd have said more, only Sue and I were so wrapped up in ourselves. . . . We'll go West and start over."

"With a new mob?" asked Willy quietly. "If Capone reaches from Chicago to here, why can't he reach other places?"

"We've got to do something," said Pat desperately.

"That's what I thought," said Willy. "You've taught me plenty, Pat. You took me when I knew from nothin', and you taught me stuff guys like Parr will never know. Parr is good, and he's ahead of me. But he's good because he's naturally a boxer. I know stuff."

"You can't win," said Pat despairingly.

"Let's go down to the club," said Willy.

In the taxi he was tense. He had always been honest with Pat before, right down to the bricks. Now he was holding back, and perhaps they would wind up in the river, at that. It was a cold, raw night, and the water of the river would be pretty awful.

They got out and went in, and Atkins was waiting. The Kid said: "They give us li'l' ol' hole fo' dressin'-room, but it's private."

It was small and dark, and smelly with a basement odor, but Willy dressed quickly and lay on the table. Pat had a way of rubbing the back of his neck that relaxed him, and he was eager for the treatment. Pat didn't give him the last-moment advice which always came from him at other times like this.

Kid Atkins was nervous too, and he talked. His soft Southern voice was soothing. He kept saying over and over: "If we c'd jes' hit him wiff one right hand. Jes' one."

Willy tried not to think about anything but the fight. He heard the call from the hall and got off the table. Pat looked as if he were going to an execution. They went up a flight of stairs, and a dark man blocked their way. He looked at Willy and said: "Now remember, bum. No funny stuff."

Willy said: "They put us downstairs."

"Just don't pull anything," the man said harshly, and stepped aside to let them pass.

Pat muttered: "I'd like to slap his puss off."

They went down to the ring, and there was Sue, all dressed in a fine tweed suit and waving happily at Willy. She believed in him. It made him happy for a moment, seeing her, knowing that she believed.

Parr was already in the corner, impatient, silent, glaring across at Willy. Gold was waving his arms, pretending to know something about acting as second and failing miserably. Two experienced handlers flanked Gold. It was the big-time corner, anyone could see, and Parr's bathrobe was scarlet and gold, like a duke's banner.

There was a big-time audience, too. The mob was there, and the ace reporters came to have a gander at Parr, the comer. St. Joe's was the trial house for the Garden.

Willy looked down and recognized men whose favorable opinion could make a fighter overnight.

EVEN the mobs could not prevent that, he thought shrewdly. They couldn't stop a big-time reporter from having his say. They couldn't make McGeehan take water—nor Pegler in Chicago. Dan Parker, Paul Gallico, could not be frightened. They knew a fighter when they saw one, and they bluntly said what they believed.

The referee called him out, and he stood quietly listening to the time-honored instructions. Pat's thinning hair was blond and silky in the arc lights. Parr was grouchy. Gold was all teeth and oil. The referee was business-like, cold.

Willy went back and threw off the sweater which always went into the ring with him, and tried the ropes. He was very young, and his muscles had not yet set, but they rippled beneath his skin like loose snakes. He smiled encouragingly at Pat's dismal countenance; nodded as the Kid lifted his hands in the old salute to the gladiator. . . . He felt a bite of remorse—for the first time Hafey did not know how he felt, what he was about to do. He felt treacherous, and just for a moment he was afraid.

Then the bell drowned all his thoughts, and he went out to meet Jack Parr, challenger for title honors: little Willy Boulder, an upstart from Midburgh, Midstate, without honor, without backing, just a boy with two hands, son of an amateur champion of another day, a boy born to the business of boxing, weaned on red leather gloves.

He went out, and Parr jabbed with an educated hand which probed and stabbed and lanced. He went out and lowered his round head, tapping it with his right glove, catching the lefts.

He caught them on his shoulder; he caught them atop his skull. He moved gently, almost slowly, letting Parr try that left. It was a beautiful jabbing job the dark, serious man put on him. It was a tireless, long jab, almost like Leonard's, carrying authority, ripping in there with a loose shoulder behind it. A man could be slowed down, cut

and eventually set up for a knockout by the coiled right.

He slid with it; he rolled with it. He tucked a couple of short rights beneath it, but Parr was going away. Parr was always going away from his right.

Then the round ended. Pat looked sharply down at Willy and said: "That was beautiful. How do you do that?"

Willy said: "He's good, huh?"

"He hasn't hit you yet," said Pat.

The second round began. In the front row the wise reporters were suddenly sitting up, paying strict attention. Parr's left was tireless, like a piston, but Parr was not throwing any rights. Parr had seen Willy hit Atkins with a right. He was going to box it out, wear Willy down.

It was a question of time, a race with time, it developed. The third round, the fourth, were like the first. Parr kept wheeling, lightfooted, never setting, stabbing the left. Willy kept going in, trying the right hand underneath, to the body. Parr evaded it and landed a few lefts, glancing blows. The gallery gods did not like it, but the ringsiders were staring, disbelieving their own eyes.

One of the best left hands in the business was going awry. There was no mouse over Willy's eye, no blood from his nose. The kid from Midstate was not doing anything showy, but he was avoiding a whipping. He was losing by a shade. . . . A great boxing writer whispered: "You see it? The kid knows he can't win, but he's not going to get hurt losing. Damn the damned hoods who control this business!"

His companion, equally as famous, said: "You're looking at a great pair. They're comers. They're *boxers.*"

Parr was indefatigable. Willy looked for openings and found none. The serious lad's left hand was always up there. His lean body swung and pirouetted like a bullfighter's. He was steady; he was serious; he knew his danger from the right.

IT was the fifth. Willy said: "He's beatin' me, huh?"

"By a shade, kid, by a shade," Pat said exultantly. "You've improved a thousand per cent, kid. While I was playing with Sue, you came along. I'm proud of you, kid."

"Okay," said Willy. "Okay." He felt fine. It was a ten-rounder, and he had lost the first five. It was the sixth coming up.

He took a last gulp of the smoky air. He listened for the first clamor of the bell. He shot out of his corner.

Gone was the lackadaisical style of the first half of the bout. Gone was the polite boxing, the evasion of Parr's left. Gone was the ducking, weaving style which had baffled his more experienced opponent. Out he came,

Illustrated by John McDermott

The dark man and two other men appeared as though by magic. . . . "Bo says this is his boy."

and all of a sudden the old club was in an uproar.

Willy landed in Parr's corner. Instinctively that gentleman stuck out his left, maneuvering out of the way of the expected right, stalling for time.

But there was no thundering right reaching for Parr's ribs. There was, instead, a left jab. There was the identical left jab which had carried Pat Hafey to draws with Leonard, with Goodrich, Rocky Kansas, twice with Canzoneri. There was the same dropping motion, the same paint-brush effect on its end.

It connected with Parr's face. It jolted his head, made his eyes stare. He tried to counter, met the strength of a young bull, a slashing right to the midriff which sent him backwheeling. He stood at bay, and the left came in, ever in, just a trifle quicker than his own left, just a bit more power emanating from the unformed but bulky shoulders of the boy from the sticks.

Parr was game. He tried everything in the book, and he chose to play it clean, for that time. He fought his way out of the corners and got to midring, baffled but still willing. Willy climbed him.

There was a flurry of punches as Parr dropped his head and finally fought, forgetting the left. And then there was Willy, leading Parr around as though on a string, teaching him the things Pat had taught, teaching him the old feint and parry and cross, the business with the head, the short ones which jolted and stunned and made a man ready for the pay-off.

The bell saved Parr. In his corner Manny Gold was leaping and screaming and cursing and slinging his arms to the heavens which knew him not. Swarthy-visaged men, bald, red-faced men with jowls, little cutthroat men, were muttering. But the reporters, those blasé, hard-boiled men, were screaming advice. They were roaring as one at the corner where Pat Hafey, pale as a ghost was saying: "Willy—you don't dare, Willy. . . . It's your life, kid. . . . I tried to make you

Willy stepped close and threw it . . . not over a dozen inches from his chest to Parr's chin, and he exploded it there.

understand. But oh, Willy! How damned beautiful! How perfect!"

Willy said: "Get out o' my way at the bell." His eyes were blazing in a way Pat had never seen. He said: "I'll be dead—or some day I'll be a champ!"

The bell came, and Willy went as though shot from a gun. He nailed Parr in the corner, and Parr tried to butt him away. He took the butt and slammed the right hand inside, where Parr had feared it all along. He walked back and shot out that left hand which was so much better than Parr's left hand.

The dark boy sagged. Then Willy stepped in close and threw it. He wrapped it all up into a short one, not over a dozen inches from his chest to Parr's chin, and he exploded it there. He felt the impact on his knuckles and was grateful for Pat's old-time way of keeping his hands tough with brine. . . .

He saw Parr come unbuckled—and walked to a neutral corner. The referee's voice as he counted was no longer cold and brittle. It was slightly awed and somewhat afraid. He counted slowly, but he could have counted a million. Jack Parr was through for the evening. He never stirred when the handlers picked him up.

Pat was white around the mouth, but Sue was jumping up and down, and the nearest reporters were asking her questions about Willy, and she was loving it, giving them background for tomorrow's story. They had a tale to tell, but now that it was over, some of them were worried. They knew about Manny Gold and the mobs. . . .

Willy wrapped the sweater around him and followed Pat. Kid Atkins, delirious with joy, followed. They went through the cheering crowd and down the flight of stairs. It was dim in the hallway.

A man stepped out, and Willy grabbed Pat and said: "No, Pat."

The man said: "Okay, kid?" It was the dark man who had stopped them before the fight, and Pat stared at him.

Willy said: "I got him."

The man said: "Bo's here."

Willy said: "I saw Bo. I'll get dressed quick."

He went inside, and then he had to tell Pat. He told the whole thing, right from the beginning.

Pat said: "I don't like it."

"Play it out," Willy begged.

"We've got to," said Pat grimly. "But I don't like it."

Willy dressed. They went out into the dim hall. Four men appeared. They made a cordon, and one held a blackjack in his hand. He said: "You wouldn't take it in the ring, so I'll give it to you right here."

Pat hit the man very quickly and sharply. His friends started to close

in. The dark man and two other men appeared as though by magic. They had flat black guns in their hands.

There was a moment's silence. Then the man Pat had hit wiped blood from his face and said: "Bo's boys, aintcha?"

"Yeah," said the dark man. "He's our kid."

"This'll cause trouble," said the bleeding one flatly.

"Bo says bring on your trouble. This is his boy."

The man looked at the guns, then at the faces of the silent guards, as though to memorize them. He said: "Okay, we aint heeled." He took his followers away, still wiping his bloody nose.

The dark man said: "Okay, kid. Now take it easy."

They went upstairs. Sue was waiting. They went into Hayman's office. Bo was there, fingering his tiny mustache. Hayman was shivering a little. He took out a wad of bills and paid them, quick like that. He said: "How should I know? Nobody tells me. Who wants the Maffia on him? I got you Jakie Spear for next week—the week after. Any time, Mr. Hafey, I'll get who you want."

Pat was stony-faced. He had tried to get Spear for Willy a dozen times—an experienced club fighter who could give Willy a great workout without harm. He nodded, and they went out.

Pat said to Bo: "I don't like it."

"You don't get it," said Bo. He was smiling tenderly at Sue, his hat in his hand, bowing.

Willy took Sue aside and listened to her praise, but with one ear he heard every word that passed between Pat and Bo Martini.

Bo said: "I aint in the game."

"You are now," said Pat bitterly.

Bo said: "Look, I fronted for the kid, huh? He worked for me, di'n't he? Could I let Gold and the mob shove my boy around? I *like* the boy. He's my kind o' lad."

Pat said bluntly: "You're a racketeer."

"Sure," said Bo. "I'm a big shot, too. I proved it t'night, see? I got them bums buffaloed. I got my angles, Hafey. I don't need your boy. I just *like* him, unnastan'?"

Pat said: "You mean—no strings attached?"

"Nuttin'," said Bo emphatically.

"But what's in it for you?"

"Look," said Bo, "can't I put you hep? I aint a bad guy. I'm in the rackets, sure. You think I di'n't clean up t'night? I bet twenty grand at one t' eight—figger it out, pal. I busted about a dozen bookies t'night, bettin' on our boy. . . . But that aint it, neither. I gotta mom, see? I gotta kid brother—seven of 'em. I make my Sunday mass, Hafey. I'm gonna front for Willy, and you aint gonna stop me, and nobody aint gonna stop me. You gotta fight fire with fire, they say, huh? Okay, I'm fire!"

Hafey said: "Can I believe my ears? Martini—you're a pal."

"Sure," said Martini. "I'm Willy's pal. And don't *you* never try puttin' nuthin' over on him, see?" He winked at Willy. He took Sue's hand and shook it hard. He waved at Pat and walked jauntily out of St. Joe's. He was in time to count the register at the NONPAREIL BOWLING ALLEYS—and sell a few cases of bootleg liquor over the telephone. . . .

They walked up to Fifth Avenue. It was cold, and tomorrow night was New Year's Eve. In Pat's pocket a wedding license crinkled. Fine green bills nestled with the official paper. They looked at the midtown scene, strolled up past the brilliantly lighted fairyland windows of the smart shops. They sighed in unison, linking arms.

Sue said: "It's the Big Time, all right. I can't believe we're all in it. But isn't it a grand and glorious feeling?"

"Aint it?" echoed Willy.

"Your grammar!" Sue remonstrated. Then she had to laugh. He was just a boy—but he had put them up there, in the Big Time; and it seemed that he could, without grammar, keep them there!

The March of Toms

A QUIZ

by BUD CORNISH

THERE was Tom, the piper's son, who did a little running—but the following Toms did a lot of running on diamonds, race-tracks, in boxing-rings and in sports, generally.

You've been hitting steadily in the averages in other BLUE BOOK name quizzes, so twelve out of the fifteen will allow you to beat your own personal tom-tom. Under ten, and your tom-tom is busted! Each dot means a letter, and if you find a sticker, try saying *Tommy* to yourself and it may sound more familiar.

1—TOM ..... He was an All-American the Midwest rated with Grange. He was lost twice and saved twice in World War II.

2—TOM ..... This gentleman pitched for Washington in a World Series. His last name is back in the *Z's* in the telephone-book!

3—TOM ..... A master boxer who resigned as light heavyweight champion to try for heavyweight rating. His success was minor after he met Jack Sharkey.

4—TOM ..... For years a kingpin on Detroit's hurling staff. He was one of baseball's hardest ..... to cross for the hitters.

5—TOM ..... There was an ancient poet by this name, but this particular fellow drove a racing-car at blinding speeds.

6—TOM ..... His powerful bat, his good outfielding, helped keep the Boston Braves going in 1945.

7—TOM ..... He fought Jack Dempsey and stayed the limit. But the gate was so small, he didn't get a nickel for doing it!

8—TOM ..... Always a leading golfer, he's called "The Black Scot." Think of a meat-packing concern, and you've got him.

9—TOM ..... Least-known of all the modern heavyweight champions, he took over when Jim Jeffries retired. Jack Johnson beat him.

10—TOM ..... He owns the Boston Red Sox. His pocketbook opened to buy stars, but a pennant's been long in coming to the Hub.

11—TOM .... A Welsh fighter who went fifteen rounds with Joe Louis. He was a good boxer, but with not quite enough punch.

12—TOM ..... Old-time big-league arbitrator for nearly forty years. The first letter is *C* and the last one *y*.

13—TOM ..... He was a pepper-pot for the Pittsburgh Pirates as a rookie, early in the 1945 season.

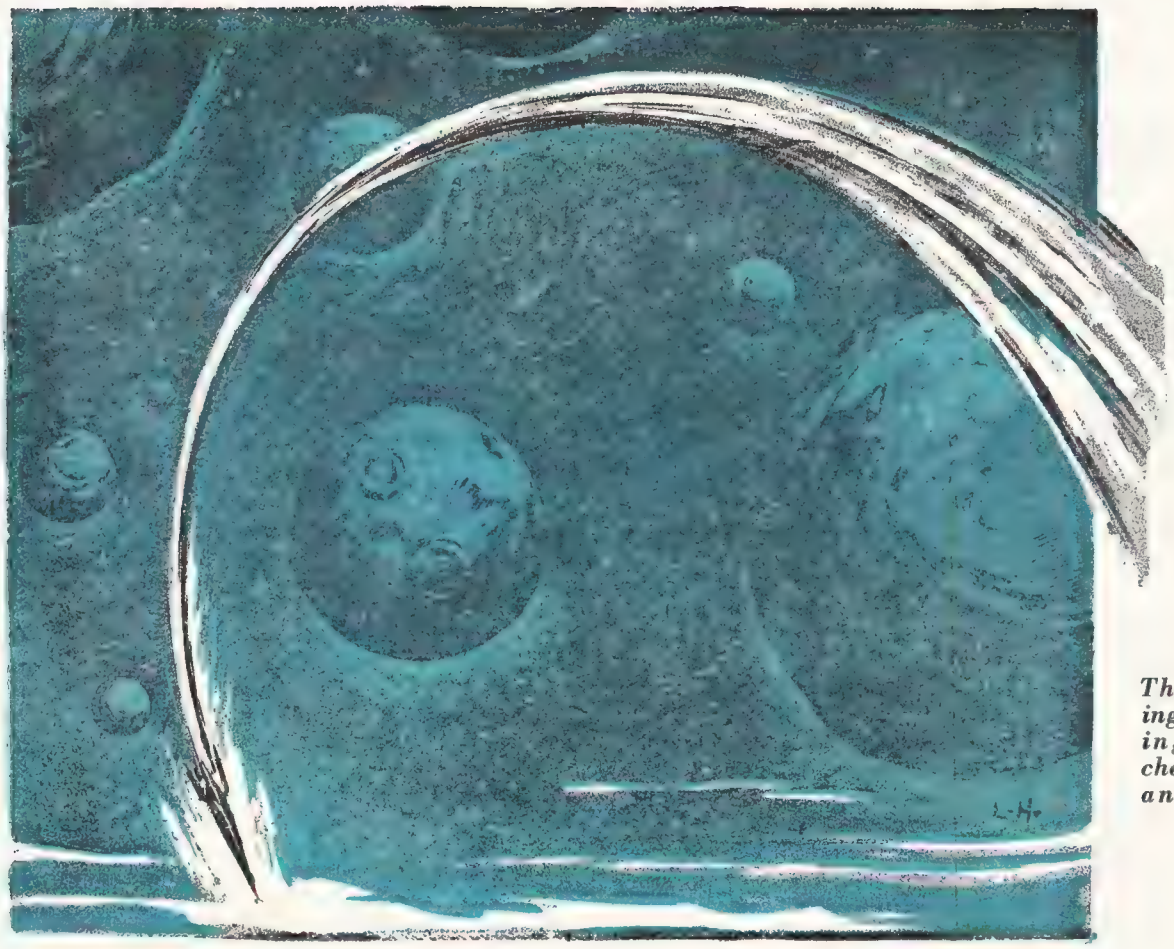
14—TOM ..... He filled in a gap for the New York Yankees in the outfield until called into service. Think of an elderly chicken, and wealthy!

15—TOM ..... Gene Tunney's farewell boxing tune was played on the countenance of this rugged scrapper from New Zealand.

Answers

1—Harmon. 2—Zachary. 3—Lou-gehran. 4—Bridges. 5—Milton. 6—Holmes. 7—Gibbons. 8—Armour. 9—Burns. 10—Yawkey. 11—Farr. 12—Connolly. 13—O'Brien. 14—Henrich. 15—Heeney.

The



The rocket was rushing ahead into nothingness with the cheerful abandon of an undiscovered comet.

I HAD often thought that the next spot of bother might easily be some form of inter-planetary trouble, but I certainly never anticipated the way it would happen, nor the surprising things which it would reveal. I was living near Worcester at the time—which was some months after the end of the German war; and I had taken my car out one sunny afternoon to enjoy my newly increased petrol ration and take a walk on the famous hill called Bredon.

I had the place almost to myself; and it was looking its loveliest with white clouds chasing each other in the sky and purple shadows moving over the rich valleys where the plums were beginning to ripen. There were larks singing in the sky too, invisible patches of brilliant song; and I was just beginning to think: "At last here we are back almost where we started. Larks instead of sirens. Clouds instead of aircraft. Peace, perfect utter peace!"—when at that exact moment there was another sound, also in the sky and also invisible, but quite definitely not a lark.

It was a whistle, a low whistle increasing in volume. It might conceivably have been the kind of whistle that a rude soldier makes when he sees a pretty pair of ankles. But there weren't any rude soldiers about, or any ankles except mine; so it certainly wasn't that. The best way to describe the sound is to state my reactions to it. These were instinctive and instantaneous. In about the twentieth part of a second I had hurled my portly self into a nearby ditch, which was fortunately dry, but also full of stinging nettles, which was not so pleasing. However, worse had happened in my days as an air-raid warden; and I pressed my head down, down, amongst the nettles, waiting for the explosion.

There was no explosion. The whistling, which had reached an almost infernal pitch, stopped suddenly: there was perhaps five seconds' silence, then a very gentle plop at a distance I estimated at fifteen or twenty yards. I did not raise my head at once. I kept my nose pressed against the nettles and listened to the larks still singing in the sky. Then very cautiously I raised my head and looked around. About eighteen yards away I saw what might have been a white pocket handkerchief lying on a clump of bracken.

My first instinct was to remove myself from Bredon and the larks quickly, and leave all further investigation to the Bomb Disposal Squad, if such a thing still existed. But then I remembered reluctantly that I was still on the reserve, and that I was supposed to be competent—after a hair-raising course of instruction I had had—to cope with incendiaries and simple bombs up to twenty-five pounds in weight.

I approached the pocket handkerchief with all suitable caution and found, as was to be expected, that it was a small silk parachute. Presumably it must have been timed in some way to open at quite a low height, say five hundred feet. That was the only way I could explain the whistling and the silence. But I was not worrying much about the parachute. Attached to it on a very well-contrived sling was an aluminum cylinder about the size and shape of a leather thermos-bottle cover, and this cylinder was nestling gently but firmly amongst the bracken.

The ends of the cylinder were what interested me at first. I was expecting to see a fuse of some kind, but there was no sign of anything of the sort. I then noticed writing on the side of the cylinder. The writing said very clearly in capital letters:

THE CONTENTS OF THIS SELF-PROPELLING CONTAINER ARE HARMLESS.

All very encouraging! But I had also done a course on booby-traps, so that did not convince me at all. And I went on examining the thing from every angle without actually touching it. The trouble was that there was obviously more writing on the cylinder, but that writing was on the part resting on the ground. In other words, if anyone wanted to read that writing, somebody, presumably the same person, had to be brave enough to move the cylinder gently round and

Rocket *and the* Ricochet

A gay philanderer gets his come-uppance in this all-too-atomic age.

by LAURENCE KIRK

turn it over until he could see the writing. . . .

Well, I did it. I won't say how long I took, nor describe the antics I went through. But I did it.

And this was the reward for all my devotion to duty.

THIS CYLINDER IS THE PRIVATE PROPERTY OF SIR BASIL STAMFORD, BART., F.R.S., 15 BELGRAVE SQUARE, LONDON S.W.1. AND IS TO BE DELIVERED TO HIM PERSONALLY WITHOUT DELAY.

This was too much after all I had been through! I swore loudly; picked up the container and parachute without any precautions at all, and strode off angrily to my car.

THAT night in my library at Pershore I opened the container. I did it with a tin-opener, a weapon with which I am now very practised. But before getting to work on the container, I sat down and wrote to Sir Basil Stamford, Bart., F.R.S., of 15 Belgrave Square, London S.W.1. I did not know the man and had never heard of him; but I do not consider it necessary to be introduced to a person in order to be rude to him. So I just sat down and let him have it. I pointed out very coldly that I, a respectable citizen out on my lawful occasions, had only just escaped serious injury owing to the casual way he handled his private property; and that if he, or any other baronet, wanted to have the blasted thing back, he could darned well come down and get it at Pershore.

I think it was the satisfaction of getting this letter off my chest that set me going with the tin-opener. It did not take me very long, and in fact if I had screwed the top to the left instead of to the right, I need not have used the tin-opener at all. The main thing is that I soon had the contents on my table, and the contents were twenty sheets of paper closely written with a blunt pencil and a complete disregard for the rules of grammar.

The story it told was at first quite unintelligible. It seemed to be a dream: a bad dream written down as it occurred. On the other hand, from the very first word I had an uneasy feeling that I knew the handwriting; and after struggling with the first four pages, I turned to the last lines on the last page, which ran as follows:—

. . . . so you see, old boy, this time I'm in a proper jam.
S.O.S. S.O.S.
Jimmy.

That brought it all back in a flash. Jimmy Deane! I had had occasion as legal adviser to one of the many injured parties to know about Jimmy Deane rather well. He was one of those extremely attractive, completely irresponsible young men to whom the war was a perfect godsend. It provided in fact a legitimate outlet to his genius for mischief, and enabled him to be decorated for it by a grateful government instead of just appearing at Bow Street. He was one of the earliest to take to parachuting; and from then on he just parachuted into one bit of trouble after another.

But unfortunately even the greatest war of all time could not absorb

I approached the silk with all suitable caution.

Illustrated by L. H. Hamilton

Jimmy hobbled behind the lovelies, leaning heavily on the prettiest of them.

all his propensities for mischief. He had leave at intervals, and leave invariably meant women. If Jimmy found a woman attractive, it did not matter who she was. She might be a Ward in Chancery, or a Lady in Waiting; it made no difference to Jimmy. And it certainly did not matter whether she had a husband or not—although almost invariably she did. Jimmy just parachuted into her life, swept her off her feet; then when the affair was getting ripe for a show-down in the divorce court, the next thing one heard was that Jimmy had been dropped in some remote part of Yugoslavia and had started a second front all on his own. The divorce proceedings naturally hung fire while this was going on, and then finally wilted. And the next time Jimmy came on leave, it was a totally different lady.

So much for Master Jimmy Deane. But there was another thing I now remembered about him. Sometime earlier his name had appeared in the casualty list under the heading: "Missing on Air Operations." At the time when I saw the notice, I just thought casually: "Oh, well, perhaps the world is now safe for husbands to live in." But, "Missing on Air Operations" was a very unusual heading. Why not "Missing on Active Service"?

It was already well after midnight when I thought of this. But I stayed up and waded through the whole twenty incoherent pages in the hopes of finding the explanation. I didn't find it. The fantastic story it told was the second volume of a book which was unintelligible unless you had read the first volume. It was tolerably clear, too, that if I wanted to know about that first volume, the Baronet was the man to tell me. I decided that I would go and call at 15 Belgrave Square after all.

Actually it was he who came to see me. He must have been an early riser, for he arrived hot on the heels of a telegram soon after breakfast the next day. His car was a Bentley, and I wondered rather sourly where some people get their petrol from.

HOWEVER, he was not at all the kind of person I expected. To begin with, he was only about Jimmy's age and had considerable charm of manner. He softened me at once by addressing me as "sir."

"I'm terribly sorry, sir, that you have been put to this inconvenience and trouble. If things had gone right, it would never have landed in this part of the country at all."

I assured him that it was nothing really, apologized for the heat of my letter, and asked if he had had breakfast.

"Had it before I started, thanks, old boy," he said. (I noted how quickly he dropped the "sir," once it had served its purpose.) "Always breakfast before I start."

By this time we were in the library, and he saw the container on the table.

"Ah, there it is! . . . I thought so!" Then in a somewhat injured tone: "I say, you've opened it!"

"I have. Any objections?"

"Well, security, old boy, security! But I don't suppose it matters now. The whole story will be out in a few days. . . . You know who it's from?"

"Yes, Jimmy Deane."

"And you know Jimmy Deane?"

"I have heard a lot about him."

Sir Basil then asked my permission to read the contents. I told him to go ahead, and sat watching. Neither of us spoke for half an hour; but all the time he was reading, he kept on frowning and clucking as though he were a hen who had produced an egg with all the wrong-colored spots on it.

Finally he put the papers down and sighed wearily.

"I think he's right," he said. "He is in a proper jam."

I paused a moment and then put my question.

"Would it be asking too much to inquire how this extraordinary situation came to develop?"

"No, I don't think so," he said. "I can tell you. I have a science degree of some value, and I put my house and myself at the disposal of the Government. I was head of a rather special Met. Bureau working for the Forces."

"Met?" I inquired.

"Meteorological," he explained shortly. "It was all very hush-hush at the time, but now everything is coming out. . . .We had decided that it was necessary, for a certain operation we had in hand, to take some observations on the moon."

"Good God, do you go as far afield as that nowadays?"

"We were beginning to," he said casually. "These new rockets made it a comparatively simple matter. Of course it had to be thought out rather carefully. In this instance we decided that the rocket should pass the right-hand edge of the moon at a distance of from twenty to twenty-five miles."

"Nice of you not to add another crater on the poor old moon!" I murmured.

"It wasn't exactly that," he went on amiably. "If you're passing an object at that speed, you have much more time to do what is necessary than if you were actually going to hit it . . . Anyway it was perfectly simple. The rocket had a team of six, each in his own sealed section, with oxygen, technical apparatus and parachute. The captain was in charge. At the appropriate moment he pressed a button, and a red light appeared in each sealed section as a signal for the occupant to cut himself adrift. There was plenty of time. Half a second between each."

"And they all did it successfully except Jimmy?"

"Yes. The others are all back in this country now."

"But Jimmy!"

"Exactly! Jimmy! I suppose he must be speaking the truth, but it really is inconceivable to me that a man could go to sleep at a moment like that."

"I don't know," I said. "He probably needed sleep. He had just been on leave, hadn't he?"

"But damn it all, one doesn't go to sleep when one is passing the moon—on a most important mission—at a carefully calculated distance and speed. I admit that I once dozed off when I meant to get out at Watford, and got carried on to Euston; but that's a different matter altogether."

"I'm not so sure. I think the moon and Watford are very much the same to Jimmy. Besides, he had rather a habit of falling asleep at the wrong moment. You remember the time with the Brigadier's lady—when Jimmy fell asleep, very fast asleep, and the Brigadier came home on a forty-eight."

Sir Basil looked rather uncomfortable.

"I have always endeavored," he said virtuously, "not to get mixed up in Jimmy's private life."

"Well, we're mixed up in it now," I retorted. "Where exactly do you suppose he is?"

"I don't know." And he looked helplessly around. "It might be Mars or Saturn or some other damned planet we've never heard of. But wherever it is, I can't say I like the way things are shaping." . . . .

The rest of the story is Jimmy's own story. I am not going to tell it

in his own words, because you can't print sentences which have no beginnings or ends, nor stops between them. But if he was telling the truth —and he was in the kind of jam when people do tell the truth—this is what happened after the other five had left the rocket.

WHEN Jimmy woke up, it did not take him long to realize what had happened. The moon was then a large yellow globe thousands of miles astern on the port side; there was no reply at all to his frantic signals on the inter-com; and the rocket was rushing ahead into nothingness with the cheerful abandon of an undiscovered comet.

It was a situation tense enough to keep even Jimmy rather wide awake for quite a long time. But there were no more moons—or anything else—in prospect; and after ten or twelve hours of acute anxiety, he dropped off to sleep again.

When he next awoke, the rocket was heading straight for some small planet or asteroid which lay right in its path like a deaf pedestrian. Jimmy shut his eyes tightly as the rocket missed it by a matter of mere thousands of feet. When he opened them again, he realized that he was in a built-up area. The sky ahead was full of globes of all sizes; and it was tolerably clear that if he did not hit one of them, he would hit another. He decided quickly that it was time to bail out.

The opportunity came when he was passing another large sphere, several times bigger than the moon, at about the correct distance. He operated the release mechanism, and was relieved to feel himself falling clear of the rocket. He did not remember the parachute opening. He remembered nothing more until he was lying on a grassy bank by a burbling stream, with half a dozen beautiful young women around him, three of whom were vying with one another for the privilege of bathing a slight cut he had received on his forehead. Jimmy sighed contentedly and shut his eyes again. This was better than any moon he had ever imagined.

The young women went on talking together in a language he could not understand. That did not worry him in the least. He had in fact in the past found it easier to make love when the women did not understand what he was saying. He could whisper in a woman's ear, "I do love bacon and eggs for breakfast," and it would sound so soulful and personal that she would think it was the most beautiful thing that had ever been said.

He did a little whispering now after a time—faintly, as though he still needed a lot of attention. All his apparatus was lying on the grass quite near, and he made it clear by signs that he wanted this removed to a place of safety, and himself conveyed to a comfortable bed.

They got the idea quite quickly. And in a short time the lovelies were staggering along, burdened with his heavy equipment; while Jimmy himself hobbled behind, leaning heavily on the prettiest of them.

The place they took him to was a kind of summerhouse right on the edge of the stream, beautifully furnished, with birds singing outside. There were also exquisite things to eat and drink, and every attention from the lovelies who seemed to guard him as though he were some kind of precious jewel. It was so near Jimmy's idea of bliss that he never gave a thought to his unfortunate colleagues on the moon, or to the Met. observations he was supposed to be taking. He just lay there like a pampered sheïk, and the only thing he did ask himself at intervals was:

"Aren't there any men in this gorgeous place?"

Well, there were men in the place, as it happened. He discovered it some ten days later, and the whole atmosphere changed abruptly. He had just finished dressing that morning and was looking forward to a tête-a-tête with his favorite lovely, when quite suddenly there were discordant noises outside. The noises were exactly as though ten husbands and ten wives were all having a violent domestic row at the same time and in the same place. There were smacks, several smacks; screams, female screams; and finally a yelp of pain from a man as though he had been severely bitten.

Silence followed this for some moments, and then the door opened and six men filed into the room, looking at him with the utmost distaste. They were all in the fifties, slightly gray on the temples; and they all wore well-cut gray suits.

At last one of them spoke, and he spoke at first in French.

"Je ne parle pas français," Jimmy replied with much effort, adding as an afterthought: *"—beaucoup."*

"Then you are an American, no doubt." The man switched to English.

"Sorry," Jimmy shook his head. "I'm just English."

The man said something in a strange language to the others, who then sat down in strategic positions round the room. He motioned Jimmy to sit down, and sat down himself opposite.

"After your behavior here," he began acidly in careful English, "you will no doubt excuse my presumption in supposing that you were either French or American. In any case, it makes very little difference what your actual nationality is."

"That's all right, sir." Jimmy tried a smile.

"I should explain," the man went on without the trace of a smile, "that I am the head of the Earth section of our Foreign Office, and that it is my duty to keep up to date with your affairs. As we have had television and what you call radar for over a thousand years, we are tolerably well informed about your affairs—such as they are."

"My affairs?" Jimmy asked somewhat anxiously.

"The affairs of the Earth," the man corrected him coldly. "It may interest you to know that we are in touch with one hundred and eighty-seven worlds besides our own; and I regret to say that your civilization is the most backward of them all. You do not seem to have tackled any problem at all on a world scale."

"I'm sorry about that," Jimmy apologized for the Earth generally.

"You are still tinkering," the man went on, "with problems that we settled thousands of years ago. As an instance, it may possibly interest you to know that we have been able to abolish prisons and law-courts. We have no crimes and no wars."

"I say!" Jimmy brightened visibly.

Then the man suddenly asked: "Would you be good enough to tell me how old you are?"

"Twenty-three," Jimmy said.

THIS was passed on in the strange language to the other men—whose expressions became more distasteful than ever.

"And have you noticed anything peculiar about conditions here?" the man went on patiently.

"Well, I—" Jimmy began. "It's beautiful country, of course."

"Quite so. Lovely country. Anything else?"

"I haven't seen any old women or—er—young men."

Jimmy said this tentatively; he did not know how young the gentlemen in the gray suits thought themselves. But apparently it was the right answer.

"Precisely," the man nodded. "We have no old women or young men." Jimmy not unnaturally looked a little puzzled, and the man went on suddenly: "If you really wanted to abolish war, how would you set about it?"

"Well, I—" Jimmy stammered.

"Have a number of conferences?" the man proceeded. "As you are doing now. I am afraid that is no good at all. We tried it ourselves."

"Disarmament!" Jimmy suggested.

"Equally useless," the man replied. "We tried that too. The only way to abolish war is to avoid having the one thing that is essential for making war. And what is that one thing? The answer is obvious, if you can think clearly: Young men of military age."

Jimmy just stared.

"This was pointed out to us," the man continued, "by one of our greatest citizens in an essay over a thousand years ago. Of course, the idea seemed somewhat revolutionary at first. But when we came to examine the question, we found there were other important advantages besides the abolition of war. Under the old system—your system—whereby children are born of different sexes, no one can be said to have a really complete life. The man does not know how life appears to a woman, or vice versa. Again, it is obvious that the first half of a woman's life is the fuller, whereas the second half of a man's life is undoubtedly the richer.

"The ideal, therefore, is for all beings to be born female, and to change their sex to male approximately at the age of thirty-five—when the average woman has already been lying about her age for five years. This is what we finally set ourselves to evolve. And incidentally there is yet another advantage in this arrangement which may not have occurred to you: Women are not invariably either scrupulous or truthful. It is very much easier for a man to know when they are being unscrupulous or untruthful, if he has been a young woman himself and knows how they set about it."

Jimmy swallowed several times.

"Wasn't this—er—rather difficult to arrange?" he asked.

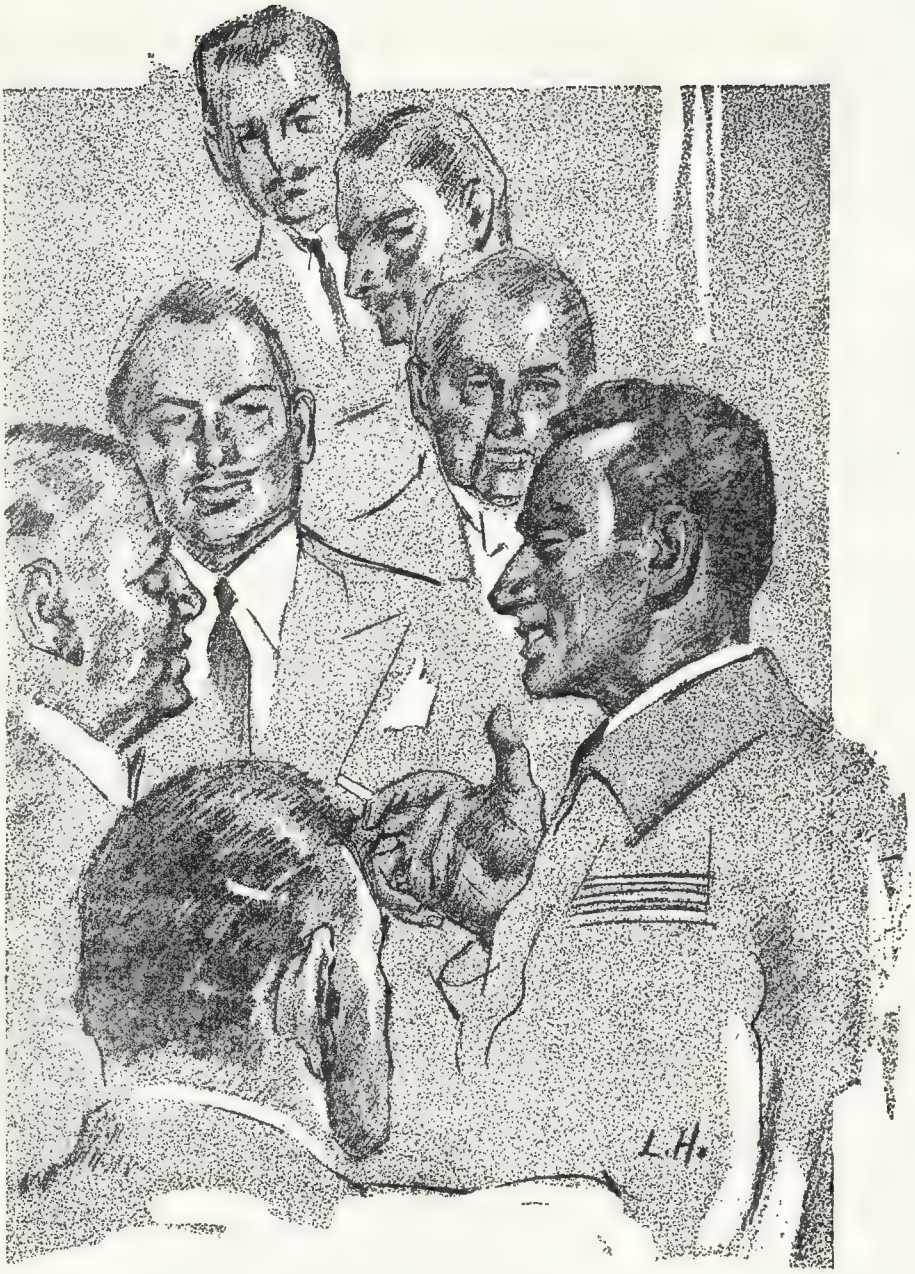
"Extremely difficult," the man agreed. "But well worth the effort! It took us ten generations to complete the change. We had to rely on surgery and medicine at first; but then gradually nature saw the advantage of what we were striving for, and came to our aid. We have not had a male child born in the land for the last five hundred years."

A LONG silence followed this statement, a very long silence indeed. Having allowed what he considered sufficient time for the situation, with all of its implications, to sink into Jimmy's mind, the man got up slowly, followed by all the other men in the well-cut gray suits.

"I think I have said enough," he ended, "to show that you hardly fit into the scheme of affairs here. As you have found means to arrive here, you are no doubt provided with means to leave again. We do not want to hurry you unduly; but until you do leave, we think it best that you should be provided with a companion—a male companion—at all times."

That, paraphrased and rearranged, was the end of Jimmy's story. There only remained his own last words.

"S.O.S. S.O.S.
Jimmy."



Six men—all in their fifties—filed into the room, looking at Jimmy with the utmost distaste.

I looked across at the Baronet.

"And has he the means to leave again?" I asked.

"No," he said shortly, "he hasn't. The captain had that on the moon. All Jimmy had was these self-propelling message-containers—of which this is the last, Number 4. And incidentally he mucked up the whole expedition because they couldn't send any messages from the moon since he had the containers."

"So he's there for good!" I said.

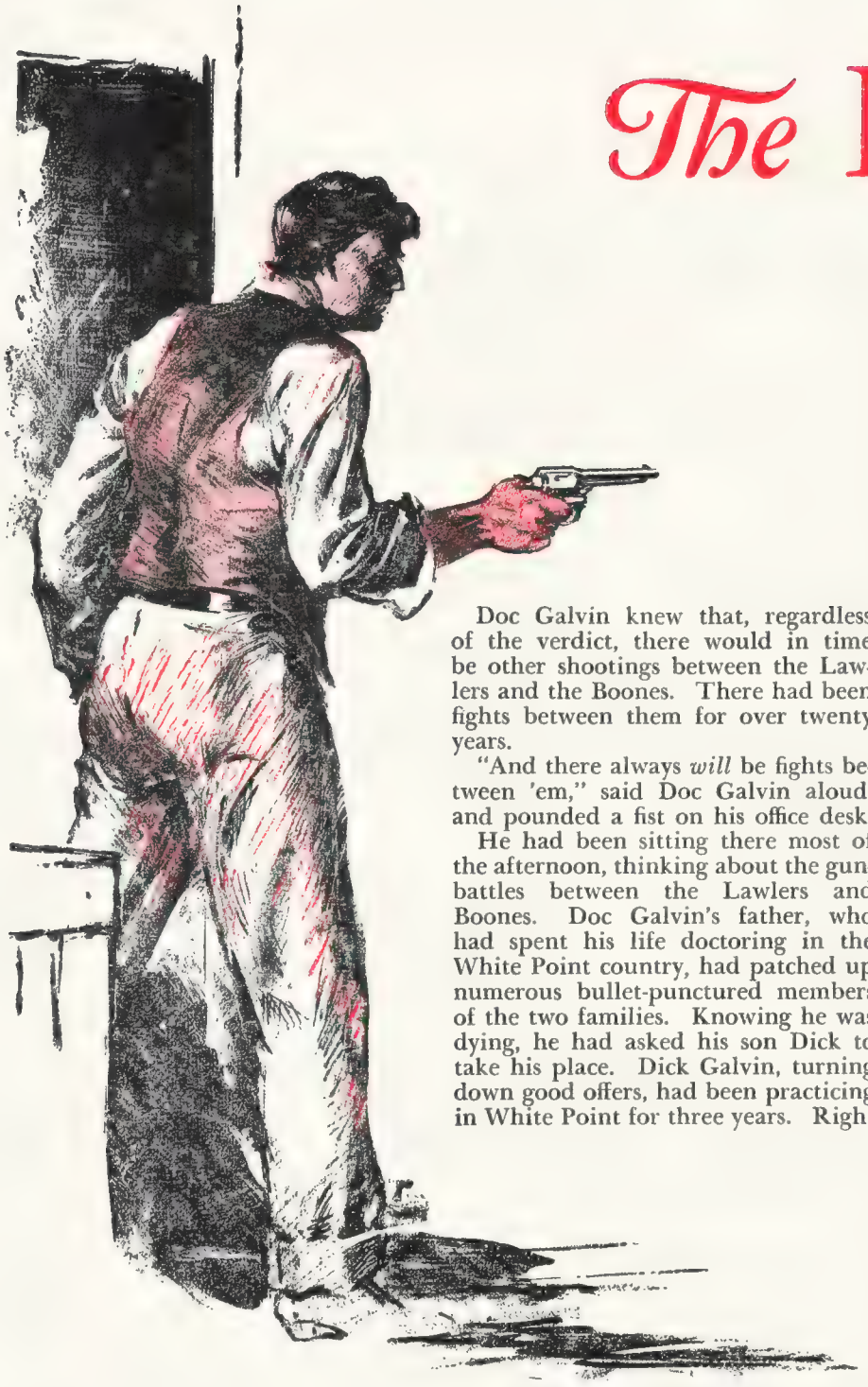
"For better or for worse," Sir Basil agreed grimly. "And I must say it looks like being worse. He really is in a proper jam!"

"Not half such a jam," I answered, "as this highly superior and civilized world into which he has intruded. Just look at the way *they're* placed: Everything is nicely arranged for an old man's paradise, when Jimmy of all people comes barging in. Jimmy amongst all those lovelies who haven't heard of a young man for generations! Why, they've got a war on their hands after all. A first-class war, too. The young women against the old men!"

"That's rather the way I feel about it," Sir Basil murmured. "But what do you think will happen to Jimmy? I mean, they don't have divorce courts or anything like that."

"Not at the moment!" I said heartlessly. "But if you ask me, they'll have to step down a peg from their high ideals and try some of our sordid earthly methods. They might even have to restore capital punishment for about five minutes. Too bad for Jimmy! But that's how it is. . . . And it won't do them any good, either. The women will never forget. He's dished that civilization for good and all."

The Feud at



Doc Galvin knew that, regardless of the verdict, there would in time be other shootings between the Lawlers and the Boones. There had been fights between them for over twenty years.

"And there always *will* be fights between 'em," said Doc Galvin aloud, and pounded a fist on his office desk.

He had been sitting there most of the afternoon, thinking about the gun-battles between the Lawlers and Boones. Doc Galvin's father, who had spent his life doctoring in the White Point country, had patched up numerous bullet-punctured members of the two families. Knowing he was dying, he had asked his son Dick to take his place. Dick Galvin, turning down good offers, had been practicing in White Point for three years. Right now he was close to rebellion. What good did it do a doctor to patch up a man, only to have him shoot someone else a few months later?

THERE had been no patients all that afternoon in young Doc Galvin's office. Everybody, sick or well, was at the trial of Dan Lawler, charged with the murder of Jupiter Boone.

Dan Lawler admitted that he had killed Jupiter Boone, but claimed self-defense. Most people in the country believed him. Jupiter Boone had always been a bully and it was believed that he had simply badgered Dan Lawler into a shooting-scrape and had got what was coming to him. Jupiter had belonged to the numerous and powerful Boone family, however, and they used pressure on the district attorney to ask the death penalty.

Once he had asked his father that. Old Doc had shrugged. "It's your business to keep 'em alive; their morals are their own business."

Young Doc Galvin couldn't shrug off shootings and killings, for he had too serious a nature. Tall, ungainly, with rugged features, people said he looked something like Lincoln.

Stirring finally, he went downstairs to the street, intending to get a cup of coffee. It was dusk of a raw, cold day. The high peak overshadowing the town loomed faintly through a clouded sky. Passing the White Point dry-goods store, he saw Mary Clemens placing a new gayly-flowered hat in the window. Her widowed mother had run the dry-goods store for many years, passing it on to her daughter, much as Old Doc had passed his practice on to Dick. Doc Galvin had been in love with Mary Clemens since he was a boy. Some day he and Mary were going to be married.

He stepped into the store. "Hoping to sell that headgear after the trial?" he asked dryly. "Think some Boone will feel so good if Dan's convicted, that he'll buy it for his wife? Or if Dan's freed, that some Lawler woman will buy it to celebrate victory?"

Mary Clemens looked at him sharply. "What's got into you since the trial started, Dick? You seem at outs with the world."

"This trial has made me count up all the men who have been shot in this country in the past thirty or forty years."

"Using guns is an old custom for settling quarrels, among men," commented Mary Clemens. "Before guns, it was swords. And if I remember my history, even countries settle arguments by guns. The Boones and the Lawler families have been in a lot of trouble, but in the main they're decent people—hard workers, good family men. It's just that the families were both early settlers here, and got off on the wrong foot somehow. The feud will die out in time."

"Only when all the Boones and Lawlers are killed off! Any news from the trial?"

"The judge is instructing the jury. They may get the case by suppertime."

A customer came into the store, and Doc Galvin, forgetting about coffee, climbed back to his office. It was almost dark by now. Lighting a lamp, he was sitting reading a medical journal a few minutes later, when he heard a board creak in the little waiting-room outside his office. He straightened. Patients entering the anteroom were directed by a notice to knock on the door of the private office. Whoever was out there hadn't knocked.

Doc Galvin was suspicious of visitors who didn't announce themselves. Years before, his father had been kidnaped one night by two train-robbers who had taken the Doctor to their camp to treat a wounded companion.

White Point

Illustrated by Raymond Thayer

Fed up with bandaging their wounds, Doc Galvin was ready to give them up when a catastrophe changed his ideas.

by RAY NAFZIGER

They had kept him in camp a week. That week of anxiety over his father's mysterious absence still lay strongly in young Galvin's memory.

Noiselessly he opened a desk drawer and slid out a loaded .44 Colt. Then, moving stealthily to the sink in the corner, he turned the tap. Ordinarily to turn a tap one faces a wall, a fact that might lure the visitor inside if he wanted to stage a holdup of some kind.

Galvin himself moved swiftly so he would be behind the door if it opened. It opened, the knob turning and the door swinging wide suddenly. Then through the doorway leaped a man in cowboy garb, masked in a bandanna and carrying a six-gun in one hand. Halting, he stared in surprise at the empty corner where the water ran in the sink.

Galvin spoke up firmly from behind the intruder. "Drop that gun or I'll drill a neat little hole between your lower ribs. Not so little either; this is a .44."

For a long moment the masked man hesitated, undecided whether to obey. Then the gun fell with a clatter.

"Turn around," snapped Galvin. "And let's see your face."

The handkerchief mask came off, revealing a beardless boy of seventeen or so. Galvin identified him as Ron Wilson, a distant cousin of Dan Lawler who was now on trial for killing Jupiter Boone.

"Since when did you have to visit me with a gun in your paw, Ron?" Galvin asked. "What do you want? Speak up."

The boy was close to crying. "I'm sorry, Doc. There's a—a friend of mine hurt; he ought to've been looked at long ago, but we was afraid the law'd make you notify the Sheriff. Tonight I was aimin' to take you out to look at him without your knowin' who I was. Then out of town a ways I was a-goin' to blindfold you so you wouldn't know where I took you."

Galvin had to chuckle at the youth's fantastic plan. "And I suppose you'd have him wear a mask too, so I wouldn't identify him. I guess he's been afraid to show up for treatment, account what's troubling him is a gunshot wound?"

The boy nodded. "You guessed it, Doc. He was shot just above the ankle. The foot's turnin' all black."

"What could you expect?" asked Galvin. "This friend of yours, Ron —he's your older brother, Joe, isn't he? I thought I heard you boys left to work in a mine in Arizona. That was just a yarn, eh? Who shot him?"

"Doc, there's a—a friend of mine hurt. . . . I was aimin' to take you out to him, without your knowin' who I was."

"Jupiter Boone. Joe was with Dan Lawler at the time Jupiter and Dan had their ruckus on Cos Creek. Joe wasn't in the fight, though. He didn't even have a gun. Jupiter intended the bullet for Dan Lawler. It would've hurt Dan's chances of comin' clear in the trial if it was known Joe had been there, too. The Boones would've claimed it was two Lawlers to one Boone—and we didn't want to cause the Lawlers no trouble. They been mighty good to us—raising us as orphan kids."

"Where you got Joe?"

"At a shack on Acacio Torreon's ranch. Acacio has helped us with grub and he's kept still about Joe. He wanted us to stay at his ranch-house, but we figgered it was too risky."

"All right," said Galvin. "You rush back to the ranch and move Joe to Acacio's house. I'll be along by the time you've got him there. Now get out of here and hustle. Your brother's in a bad way, I'm afraid."

The boy clattered down the stairs, and Galvin, all doctor again, hastened to the dry-goods store.

"I've got a call to make," he said to Mary Clemens. "Can you lock up and come with me? I'll need help."

She nodded at once and he hurried down a side street to order his team hitched to his stout top buggy. Returning to his office, he got his surgical and medical kits and put on a heavy coat. Mary Clemens had already locked the store and was waiting outside. She slid under the heavy buffalo robe beside him and they started out of town. The lights were shining from the courthouse where Dan Lawler was on trial for his life. Out of the leaden sky fell a few snowflakes.

"Who is sick?" she asked.

"Joe Wilson. I'm afraid he has a foot that'll have to come off; it was shot through by Jupiter Boone. He was a bystander, his brother Ron says, when Dan and Jupiter had their ruckus. Joe didn't have a gun and took no part in the fight, but the Wilson kids were afraid that the jury might think Joe had helped Dan against Jupiter and would convict him. Joe's been hiding out instead of having his foot treated."

AN hour later, traveling at a fast trot, they arrived at the Torreon ranch-house, its brown adobe walls looking cold through falling snow. Acacio Torreon came out to take care of the team, while the Doctor and the girl hurried indoors.

Joe Wilson had already been brought to the house and was in a bedroom. Dr. Galvin left Mary in the kitchen to warm, and entered the room where the boy lay in an old Mexican canopied bed.

Thin and haggard. Joe Wilson, normally a husky young fellow, now seemed more dead than alive. His brother Ron was by his side. Galvin made his examination and looked into Joe's lackluster dark eyes. Joe was twenty, a top cowhand, whose life so far had been spent riding range. He had heard of gangrene and he knew what it meant when it was allowed to go too far.

"I'm sorry, Joe," said Galvin. "It's the only way."

"You sure, Doc?" gasped the boy in the bed. "You mean— I'll stand any amount of pain, Doc, if I'll have a chance to ride horses when I'm up."

"It's not a matter of pain," Galvin said. "It's the only way to save your life. You can ride horses again, Joe, but not outlaw broncs. Other men are riding who are a lot worse off than you'll be."

Mary Clemens had entered the room. Tears stood in her eyes, as she looked down at Joe Wilson. Then she reached out a hand to press his thin one lying limply on the coverlet. Ron Wilson, standing by the bed, was crying unashamedly.

"Go ahead, Doc," Joe Wilson said. "I'll try to bear it."

"We can at least make that easier for you," said Galvin, and he turned to his kit containing the ugly-looking instruments of surgery and the bottle of ether then commonly used as an anesthetic.

THE operation was over and Doc Galvin had watched his patient come out of the anesthetic. Now he gave instructions to the brother.

"I'll be back in the morning," he told young Ron. "Joe's a stout one. He'll be all right, but I'll have to watch him close for a while."

Ron brought out a rawhide pouch and began to spill out gold-pieces on his palm.

"You don't have to buy me not to tell the Sheriff," said Galvin. "I'll give you a bill later."

The snow was over and the stars were crystal-clear on the return drive, a silent one. Reaching White Point at ten o'clock, they left the team at the livery stable and walked to the café, where they had coffee. Music was sounding from down the street.

"Jury cleared Dan Lawler, right after they got the case," the waitress explained. "It made the Lawlers feel so good they are holding a dance on the second floor of the Golden Rule Building; they couldn't get the Woodmen Hall because of the Boones. The Boone men are in the saloons, drinking. They didn't like the verdict and they don't like the idea of the Lawlers holding a dance. They think it's kind of celebrating that Jupiter was shot and killed."

"Can't blame 'em for thinking that," burst out Galvin. "Indian warriors used to hold dances after they'd win a battle, waving bloody scalps around as they stomped to tom-toms. But of course *we're* civilized—we don't wave scalps at our victory dances."

Mary Clemens stood transfixed, but Galvin sprang into action. "That dance-hall collapsed!" he said.

"Go ahead, Doc," Joe Wilson said. "I'll try to bear it."

The waitress looked back at the gaunt young physician curiously as she went to wait on other customers. Mary Clemens pressed the Doctor's arm.

"Please don't talk that way!"

"It's the truth," he said bitterly. "We're all still savages—killers at heart. Come up to the office, Mary; I've got something to tell you."

Lighting a lamp in his office, he pushed out a chair for her. Then from a storeroom he dragged out a dry-goods box and in a fury began taking medical books from his shelves to dump them into the bottom.

"I'm getting out of this country," he explained as he worked. "Leaving for good—that's what I had to tell you. Tonight was the last straw—the Lawlers holding a dance because a man who killed another man was freed!"

"The Lawlers aren't dancing because Jupiter Boone was killed," said Mary Clemens. "They're dancing because the Boones spent money and used all kinds of influence to have Dan Lawler convicted, but failed. Leaving here won't help. You'll find that people are people everywhere, Dick. This is your country and these are your people. Your father took care of them until he died and you took over his job. They can't get a doctor half as good as you are to come here. You've known them all since you were a boy. They like you and trust you."

"I'm leaving," he returned shortly. "That boy losing his foot out there in a quarrel he had nothing to do with, showed me the kind of country this is. I didn't study all those years to become a doctor just to take care of Boones and Lawlers. They're not human, Mary."

"They're people," insisted Mary Clemens, and going to the window she opened it wide; through it came gay dance music from the Golden Rule Building down the street. From the saloons where the men of the Boone families and their friends were congregated came the echo of furious speech and, as a symbol of the Boone anger, an occasional shot fired into the air.

"A doctor will be needed before morning," the girl said, "if some of the Boone and Lawler men happen to meet."

"They'll have to send somewhere else for a doctor. I won't be here; I'm going away. The last patient I'll look at is Joe Wilson; I'll see him as I leave and have Dr. Green at Russell call on him and my other bed patients. I've had all I'm going to stand, Mary. I'll get started somewhere else and send for you."

She turned back to him. "Dick, I say you're running away. You can't do that, leaving the people that need you. You'd never forgive yourself for it."

His laugh, filled with an acid contempt, sounded in the room. "I'll never forgive myself if I stay here to waste my time. You can call it running away if you want. I've ridden range with all the Lawlers and Boones. I've hunted with them on their ranches. They've been my friends—but I've had enough of their violence and savagery. When I get settled, you'll sell the store and come where I am?"

She considered it for a half minute, her gray eyes fixed on his face. "I'd go to the end of the world to you, Dick, if you went there for any other reason than the one you're giving. This country has been mine too. The people were kind to my mother when she was left a widow; they made it possible for her to support her family with her little store. The people need you, Dick, and maybe they need me a little too. I can't leave. You'll go away—but you'll come back."

"Me?" he grated out as he turned to snatch more books from the shelves. With half a dozen huge volumes in his hands, he straightened suddenly,

Byron and Lee Boone brought in a man they had once sworn to kill.

to stand motionless. Mary Clemens also became tense. The two were listening, more intently than they had ever listened in their lives, to a conglomerate of sound: the startled cries of people, the shrill ripping and rending apart of nailed timbers. The music of the dance orchestra died on the broken-off note of a horn, the wailing protest of a fiddle.

Then high above the harsh grind of parting timbers welled the cries of women, the hoarse bawl of men. A series of crashes followed, then a prolonged thunder which drowned out the human sounds for a moment. They came again in a tortured, terrified chorus.

MARY Clemens stood transfixed, the blood draining from her face, but Doc Galvin sprang into action.

"Good God! That dance-hall collapsed!" he said. He snatched up a kit, and next instant he was out of the door and clumping down the stairs. Behind him ran Mary Clemens.

It was a little over a block to the Golden Rule Building. Galvin had danced in its second-story hall often when he was home on vacations from college. Some nervous people had claimed even then that it wasn't safe. The floor groaned and there were ominous creakings in corners when too many people danced near them. The building of a new hall by a fraternal organization had ended the use of the Golden Rule for dancing—except for tonight when the Lawlers had rented it. Since it had fallen into disuse, the owner of the store below might have taken out a supporting post or two to make room for more counters.

Galvin was the first to reach the disaster. A few of the dancers had jumped through windows, but the rest had gone down with the collapsing floor. The whole back of the building had fallen, but part of the front half was still standing with a portion of the roof and side walls. The building was shrouded in a cloud of thick dust, through which parts of the roof and great splinters of beams slowly took form.

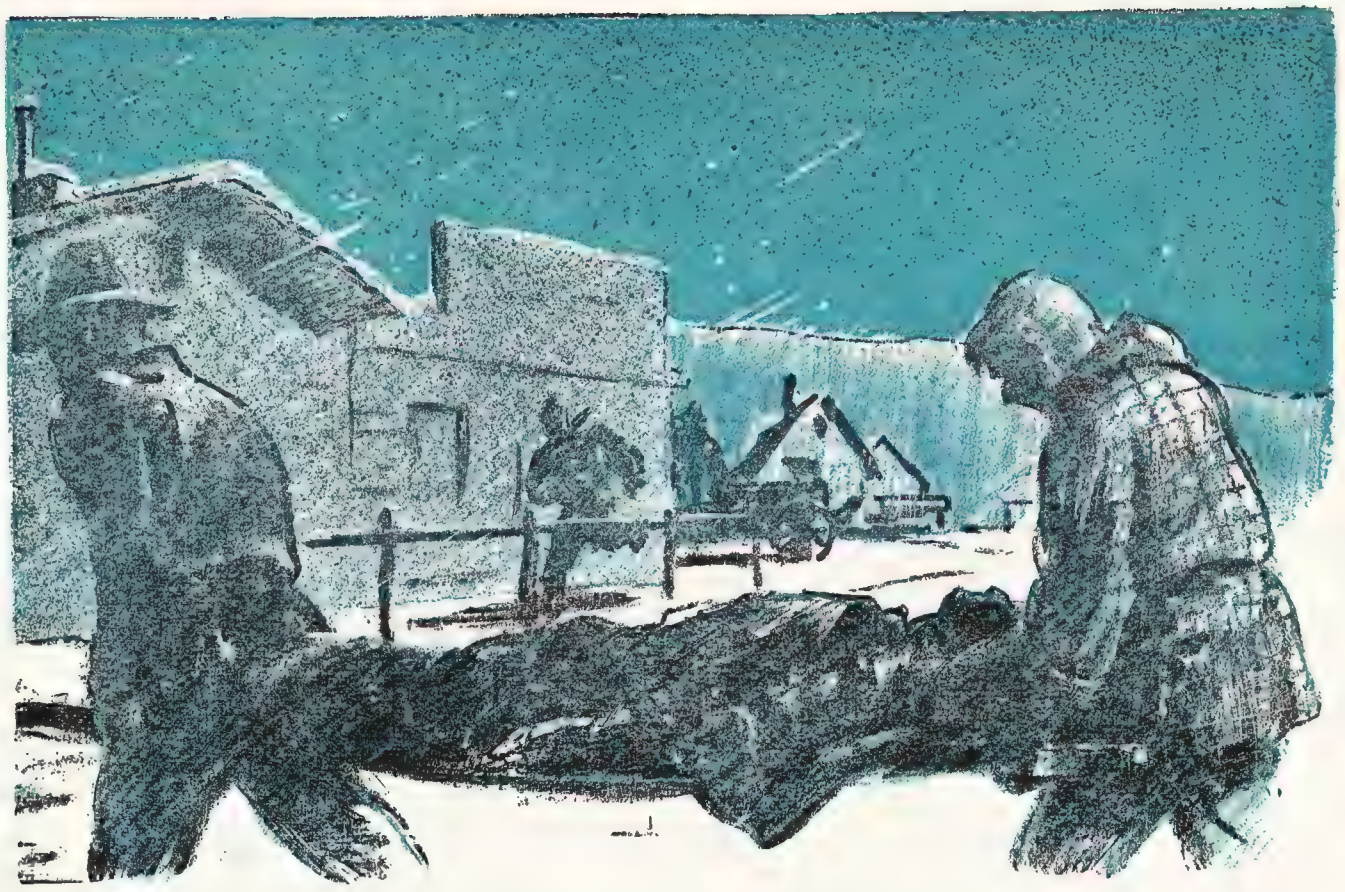
The front doors instead of being crushed in had been forced open. From beyond these doors came the agonized screams of women and the shouts of men, with the cries of children and babies who had been brought to the dance. Several dazed people crawled from the wreckage, only to start crawling back, searching for their families.

Doc Galvin was the first of the men who plunged through the doors into the dust, not knowing what second might bring the rest of the building down on them. A doctor wasn't needed yet; more needed were strong arms and backs to lift away timbers as the rescuers crawled into the little caverns made under partly collapsed beams and through narrow tunnels left by slanting boards next to the stout counters of the store.

GALVIN, fighting his way through darkness and dust, realized that more men were coming in to join the handful which had first entered the building. With them they brought lanterns. By lantern-light, as Galvin struggled to raise part of the staircase to release a woman, he saw that working by his side were Wayne Boone and his brother Ab; two years before, Wayne and Ab had been in a desperate rough-and-tumble fight with three Lawlers.

The staircase threatened to fall and crush all of them, and Wayne, almost a giant, put himself under a tottering beam, straining upward with all his strength. Galvin and Ab joined him, placing their backs under the weight. Slowly the timbers raised and the imprisoned woman, holding a small baby, crawled out through a narrow opening. The lantern revealed the two as the wife and child of Dan Lawler, who had just been cleared of murder.

Still more men crowded into the wrecked building, bringing great timbers to use as levers. By lantern-light Doc Galvin identified them: old Jeb Boone, with his son and his grandsons; two brothers of Jupiter Boone—the whole roster of the Boone family men. They worked like demons.



"Get at him soon's you can, Doc!" said Byron. "He's been a good neighbor."

Fire had broken out in a far corner where the stove had been overturned when it dropped with the floor. Smoke began to swirl like deadly serpents through the wreckage; the crackling of flames sounded. The imprisoned who were still conscious now faced the horror of being roasted alive, for there was no fire department in the town.

Darrel Boone, owner of the White Point hardware store, hurriedly got together the lengths of rubber hose in his place. These attached to spigots in nearby buildings threw a half dozen weak streams of water. Darrel Boone himself, carrying a hose-length, crawled over the wreckage of the roof close to the flames to play the hose, despite a shriveling heat. Under the water, the fire sank to a hissing smolder.

By then Doc Galvin was needed to attend the rescued injured—bodies bloody, gashed, mangled and crushed in varying degrees. He made a hospital of an empty building across the street. Mary Clemens had already hurried cots and blankets into the place and had arranged for water and bandages. Through the long hours she worked beside him, efficient, swift, directing other women.

Two brothers, Byron and Lee Boone, brought in the broken body of a neighbor of theirs, Tom Lawler —a man they had once, after a bitter quarrel, sworn to kill. "Get at him soon's you can, Doc!" said Byron Boone. "He's in a bad way, and he's been a good neighbor."

Galvin nodded, moving from cot to cot, from person to person—people he had known all his life. As he worked he noted the bravery of the children who, following their elders' example, gritted their teeth to keep from screaming. Sadly he shook his head over some he knew wouldn't pull through, wishing his father were alive to advise him; working against time, making split-second decisions in an effort to stave off death, drinking cups of coffee Mary Clemens offered him.

HE realized suddenly that daylight was filtering into the town and there were no more injured people waiting for him. He had a few minutes before he would have to make his rounds again and now he slumped with weariness.

Mary brought him another cup of coffee. "They've got everybody out, finally," she said. "All of them. It was a miracle."

"It *was* a miracle," agreed Doc Galvin. The men of the town, mostly the Boones, had literally lifted a building from the people imprisoned and threatened by flame.

A patient on a cot nearby—Dan Lawler's father—called to Doc Galvin.

"I don't know why we ever fought 'em, Doc," he said weakly. "I don't know why! They saved us tonight. If 'twasn't for the fight the Boones made to save us, most of us would've been burnt alive. They tell me Hiram Boone was killed—a wall came down on him. He gave his life for people that have always been his enemies."

Doc Galvin nodded. "You'd have done the same thing."

He stumbled into a back room and sat on a box, too weary to move.

"Another cup of coffee, Dick?" asked Mary Clemens. "With a little whisky in it?"

He didn't even hear her. "That's the answer," he said. "People are like the Boones and the Lawlers—swinging back and forth from killing people to saving the same people, giving their lives even as Hiram Boone gave his. All of us are swinging back from high to low, between human and animal. When we hit the high places, we're human; when we sink to the low, we're animal. Some day we'll be all human, and we'll stop killing."

"Yes, that's it," said Mary Clemens. "You don't judge a race-horse by his worst time; you take his best. And you should judge people by the things they do when they're at their best—as the Boones were tonight. Dick, you're not leaving White Point?"

Doc Galvin started. "Leave White Point and the sort of people they have here?" he exploded. "I should say not! First chance I get I'll start unpacking my books."

"Poor fool! Ye'd be better off all knave, like your sanctimonious papa. . . . Get out of my sight before I heave ye overboard," said Ben.

The Caribbean

IT had been just one thing after another, year after year, with that roguish young orphan Benison Dexter.

The duck-jigging episode was in fact no more reprehensible than several of the escapades in which he had been involved previously. Moreover, the court of inquiry brought to light the fact that the said Benison Dexter had played a critic's rather than an actor's part in the affair, and had argued, with physical violence, that no gentleman or true sportsman would angle for ducks from a dormitory window with a baited cod-hook, but would use a running noose of copper wire instead.

But the episode of the porter's fat young ducks had the same effect upon the patience of the college authorities as the proverbial last straw had upon the back of the proverbial camel. Young Mr. Dexter was given the air. All the air of this globe's surface without the boundaries of Harvard Yard was at his disposal. From then on, he was free to fill his nose and lungs with anything and everything in the nature of ozone save only the classical and theological atmosphere of Harvard College.

In short, Benison was expelled.

The orphan's prosperous and respectable uncle and guardian Jeremiah Dexter looked shocked and grieved—never mind how he really felt. He sighed and moaned to his equally respectable spouse:

"Dear me, the disgrace of it! And to think that poor William and Matty gave him the name in all good faith—Benison, a blessing—only seventeen years ago."

The lady shivered slightly.

"It is not your fault, Jeremiah. Nor mine. You have done your duty by him. That and more. And have not

Corsair

Benison Dexter was marked for disaster, his relatives said—had he not been expelled from Harvard College? But life along the Spanish Main differs from that in Boston.

by THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS

I been a second mother to that ungrateful, wicked boy? For eight years now—ever since your brother's shameful death when in his cups—he has caused us more trouble and humiliation than all our own children together. And now this, the crowning disgrace to your name! Expulsion from Harvard College! It is unpardonable. What next, I wonder?"

"I have given the matter—the question of what next—hours of most serious consideration," replied the lad's exemplary uncle. "And after consulting Captain Quog and the lad himself, I have decided to make a navigator of him. He will sail with Quog, as an apprentice. A few years of such apprenticeship should fit him for a mate's berth, if he attends to his duties and heeds his instructions. But whether he succeeds or fails, after two years I shall wash my hands of him with a clear conscience."

"But his—ah—inherited interest in the firm?" the woman whispered, without looking at him.

He blinked before replying. He toyed with the seals on his watch-fob while speaking.

"Hah-hem! Inherited interest? My dear, they—it—poor William's interest—was but nominal at the time of his shocking death. That was eight years ago. For eight years we have raised him like one of our own, with the best of everything: Costly tutoring and costly schooling. Dancing classes. Close upon two years at Harvard College. You must realize that my unfortunate brother contributed nothing to the business—was a liability rather than an asset—from the date of his admirable wife's untimely death. He took to fast company, as you know. Went lower and lower, from fast to rackety to downright disreputable. It is a depressing thought that the son has consistently evinced the same unfortunate inclinations. I have done my best for him, as uncle and as guardian. But I am giving him one more chance. After that, he can be nothing to us—unless he succeeds, which is not likely."

The lady gave him a sliding glance of pale eyes. Still twiddling with the seals on his fob, he pulled a long upper lip and drooped the corners of his thin-lipped mouth.

YOUNG Benison Dexter returned from his first voyage in Dexter & Company's barque *Boston Beacon* in high fettle, and high in the esteem of old Captain Quog, of the two mates, of the boatswain and of all hands. He fetched home an opulent silken shawl from Habana for his Aunt Sophia, a box of opulent cigars from the same city for his uncle, and lesser gifts for his cousins Hiram, Sophia, Jessica and Susan. Uncle and aunt looked pleased and may even have tried to feel so, but something rankled in the depths of their mean souls. They had marked him for disaster even as the president and trustees of the college had marked him. His well-being and his good sea record suggested nothing to them but a further defiance of high authority. They were relieved when he sailed again. Hoping for the worst, they restocked his sea-chest and wreathed their faces in smiles.

Apprentice Benison Dexter did not return a second time to Boston. Not at the conclusion of his second voyage, nor in the barque *Boston Beacon*, anyhow. Old Captain Quog reported the matter with obvious reluctance.

"Hah!" exclaimed Jeremiah. "I must admit that I'm not surprised. Too good to last. Jumped ship at Port-of-Spain, did he? Just so! He didn't depart empty-handed, I presume?"

"If ye mean to ax did he carry off anything he hadn't a right to, I tell ye right now, he didn't," said the elderly master, ill-humoredly.

He was too good a sailor and had been too long in Dexter employment to be dismissed, or even so much as reproved, for incivility. But the great Jeremiah had to swallow twice to get that one past his Adam's apple.

"Just so, Captain. Glad to hear it. But had he any money?"

"Money? Ay, he had money, but none o' his uncle's an' gardeen's, ye kin lay to that! He took along his own dollars, natchilly. An' why wouldn't he? They was honestly come by. He was allus lucky with the cards an' the dice, was Ben. We sot in to many a game afloat and ashore—Ben an' me an' the mates; an' masters an' mates of other ships, an' now an' then a harbor-master an' maybe a planter."

"I don't approve of gaming in my ships," protested Dexter.

Captain Amos Quog opened his eyes very wide and round, and stared. Then he all but closed them and peering, he leaned toward his employer.

"Did ye say *my* ships?" he whispered.

DURING the next four years, occasional and somewhat scrappy news came to Mr. Jeremiah Dexter of his nephew Benison. It was brought by old Captain Quog, who always delivered it to his employer with an air of grudging and withholding: He had seen the young man, or heard of him, in each of Port Royal, Turtle Bay, Tobago, Bridgetown, Port-of-Spain and Recife. He looked well, but like one with a grievance. He was well spoken of. He had been associated with a firm of ship chandlers in Bridgetown, the head of which had known his (Ben's) father when William had visited the islands frequently in the interests of Dexter & Company. He was in the turtle trade and native inter-island trade generally, for a time. He managed a large sugar estate near Port Royal for several years. He was a speculator in land, crops, small ships and their cargoes, and the fall of the pasteboards and the roll of the bones, from Port Royal to Demerara.

"Just so—a gambler to the core!" exclaimed the ship-owner. "A gamester to the finger-tips. He won't last long."

Remembering his position, he pulled a long upper lip.

"I feared as much," he sighed. "The child is father to the man. Poor lad! But I did my duty by him."

"Ay, an' more too," said the navigator, with a curious look and intonation; and he turned his head very slightly and squirted tobacco juice at a convenient spittoon.

Jeremiah flushed and paled, but kept his temper. The chief thing to avoid at this booming stage of his affairs was a quarrel with knowing old Amos Quog; and he could not fail to see that the captain's manner and words were becoming increasingly provocative. He often wondered—usually between midnight and dawn—how much the mariner actually knew, and how much he only suspected and guessed at, of Dexter & Company's affairs.

"Just so," he said. "But now to business—and pleasant business for you, Captain. I have put the best ship in port, and the most trusty master, at the disposal of a distinguished party of voyagers to Barbados."

Captain Quog nodded his shaggy head. He had heard rumors to that effect.

"The hull vessel, or passenger accommodation only?" he asked.

"Accommodation only, of course," answered Mr. Dexter, on a peevish note.

But he smoothed his brow and honeyed his voice instantly.

"But the best you can contrive, my friend," he continued, as soothingly as the application of fresh butter to a hot pancake. "The best in the port of Boston. Your barque is the most commodious as well as the most seaworthy in the West Indies trade, not to mention the best captained, found an' manned. The deck-houses we built six years ago, at your suggestion, and to your specifications, can't be matched this side New York. But you may have to shift Mr. Hatch an' Mr. Swim into the bosun's an' carpenter's berths, an' them forward into a spare sailroom or whatever. But they'll be generously rewarded for their slight inconvenience. Ay, right generously! And as for yourself, Captain—in recognition of past services, increased responsibilities an' the fact that you may see fit to shift yourself to the first mate's quarters for the voyage—an increase of fifty per centum in your monthly wage."

"Permanent?" asked the old salt.

"Ay, permanent. Quite so."

"I'll trouble 'e to write it down."

MR. DEXTER wrote it down and signed it. Captain Quog pocketed it.

"How many passengers?" he asked.

"Not many, but of the highest quality," replied the owner. "Boston's best: Mr. Stephen Maythorn's only daughter, Miss Temperance, for one. Her mother is a Lowell. And her aunt and chaperon, Miss Priscilla Lowell, for another. And their maids, of course—two at least; an' Mistress Lowell, the aunt an' chaperon, insists upon taking her own cook an' old butler along."

"Lowell or no Lowell, I'll l'arn her who's captain," rumbled Amos Quog.

The owner nodded.

"Just so, my friend. An' quite right. But tactfully, I beg of you! But your social successes, where the fair sex is concerned, are well known to me by hearsay, Captain. I'm not worrying on that score. An' there'll be my son Hiram, with his valet. But I must tell you something of the cause of all this. Mistress Temperance Maythorn is what's called a raving beauty, is now in her nineteenth year, and in the past four years, has refused the hands of a score of eligible bachelors an' widowers, not to mention ineligibles, until the local supply is exhausted. Her worthy parents—the first people of Boston, surely!—were at their wits' end, when a British kinsman of Stephen's, a cousin in some degree, Sir Barty Maythorn, invited any or all of the family to visit him at Barbados, where he is the governor. So it has been arranged, by extensive correspondence. I'll see to the extra stores. There you have it, Captain—and I trust it meets with your approval."

Captain Quog nodded thoughtfully.

"So ye have hopes yer son Hiram may succeed where over twenty better men have failed?" he mumbled.

"Quite so," admitted Dexter. "He has not been rejected yet, at least. On the other hand, he has not put the question yet. Slow and sure, that's Hiram's way; and I am backing him at very considerable outlay, for there's no denying the Maythorn-Lowell con-

nection would be a great thing for us, both commercially and socially."

Old Captain Quog laughed. It was a small laugh—no better than a cackle—for so thick and broad a man.

"Slow, for sartin, but I aint so sure about *sure*," he said.

Dexter & Company's commodious and seaworthy barque *Boston Beacon* enjoyed such fair and moderate weather, and such inboard harmony, during the first eight days of that voyage, that Captain Amos Quog shifted his helm on the ninth morning and nosed in among the sandy isles and cays of the Bahamas without rumble or gesture of protest, though his habit was to make one of the Virgins his first landfall when bound for the Lesser Antilles. Only a few hours before the barque's departure from Boston, Mr. Stephen Maythorn had received intelligence from Barbados, by the brig *Wind Flower,* to the effect that an officer of Sir Barty Maythorn's official establishment would meet *Boston Beacon* at Nassau, as a compliment to her distinguished passengers; Mr. Stephen Maythorn had communicated with Mr. Dexter in a flattered flutter; and Jeremiah—though he did not like the prospect of possible competition for his son and heir—had bustled aboard and issued the required instructions to the barque's master.

Much more of moment had happened since the raising of the old captain's monthly wage by fifty per centum, and all of it had gone smoothly and pleasantly. Preparations for the accommodation of eight passengers had gone ahead like clockwork. The mixed freight for Barbados—very salt butter in kegs and firkins, very superior cured cod in birchwood drums, cases of boots and beavers and bonnets and bales of muslins and cotton goods—had been stowed without break or hitch. Wines, liquors, cordials, fancy biscuits and potted meats of the finest had streamed lavishly into their appointed pantries and lockers and the lazaret beneath the captain's cabin. The passengers and their servants had

Illustrated by John Fulton

Young Mr. Dexter was given the air. In short, he was expelled. "Dear me, the disgrace of it!" said his uncle.

come aboard with the minimum of fuss and no friction at all. Even Mr. Hiram Dexter had behaved with becoming modesty. Captain Quog, in his best coat with brass buttons and with his hat in one hand and a brass spy-glass in the other, had bowed to the toppling point before the ladies, who had dropped curtsies in acknowledgment.

"Yer sarvant, ladies!"

Both had thanked him with their eyes. Both had dimpled at him. He had been prepared for Temperance Maythorn's beauty by an occasional glimpse and by common gossip, but he had expected to behold something of a dragon in the chaperoning Lowell aunt. A dragon! God send all worthy master mariners just such dragons!

Temperance Maythorn was called Tempy by her fortunate intimates. She was adored by all who knew her—by most people for her adorable qualities of heart and mind and body and by persons like Mr. and Mrs. Jeremiah Dexter for the worldly possessions and position of her family. In her eighteenth year, she was what is generally termed a raving beauty, though she left all the raving to others. Never consciously did she flash or flicker or melt or make fathomless her indescribably lovely eyes. Never consciously did she toss her perfect head or curve, pout or quiver her lovely lips in pride, anger, scorn or invitation. And her aunt and chaperon Priscilla Lowell was very much as she herself might be, with luck, at forty-two. That Miss Lowell had never married was a mystery to all who knew her and, additionally, a grievance to many gentlemen who would gladly have known her better. Pride? Fear? Heartlessness? Love of freedom? It was anyone's guess.

So, after eight days and nights of fair weather and inboard harmony, the Boston barque nosed aside into the intricacies of Bahaman channels in high feather. Captain Amos Quog was on the high poop-deck, within easy speaking distance of Mr. Hatch, officer of the watch; and Miss Priscilla Lowell was there too, within whispering distance of the captain. Amos still wore his best coat. The fact is, he had worn it every day since his first meeting with Miss Lowell. The brass buttons were polished nightly by the ship's boy. Amos' shaggy whiskers, which he had trimmed experimentally on the day of sailing, had been razored clean off next morning and every morning since. His plentiful, grizzled hair was neatly queued and tied with a black ribbon. Now his head was inclined as he listened with tender earnestness to his companion's murmurous chatter.

"I do so hope that the military gentleman Sir Barty has dispatched to join us at Nassau is young enough to interest dear Tempy—yes, and dashing and romantic and single too; for I must confess—but I'd never breathe it to anyone in the world but you—that your young Mr. Hiram Dexter is a very dull person. He will never carry any woman's heart by storm, and my dear niece's last of all. I admit that she is difficult to please in such matters, though as compliant and amiable as any dairymaid in most others. But I have hopes for her of this voyage—romantic hopes—or the enchanting creature may some day find herself a poor old maid like me."

"I know her," Benison said. "Saw her off Barbuda once. It's her—the pirate!"

CAPTAIN QUOG made strangling sounds, though his lips scarcely moved. She looked up into his face with gentle and yet lively inquiry. But he did not meet her glance. Who was he, poor old sea-dog Amos Quog, to look at Miss Priscilla Lowell the way he felt? So she smiled and left him. He turned woodenly to windward, raised and aimed his telescope at nothing with unsteady hands and saw nothing.

The Boston barque had not been twenty minutes at anchor in the roadstead before a long, canopied, eight-oared cutter came off to her from the King's Quay. She was brought alongside in man-o'-war style. The first to come up and over the side was the harbor-master's deputy with tarnished gold braid and an official air about him.

The deputy was followed by a tall, smiling young man who was clothed in easy and unadorned white, and who doffed a hat of native straw to the ensign at the taffrail, or to the ladies on the poop-deck, and then extended his right hand to Captain Quog.

"Name of Normanby, sir," he said. "You're expecting me. I hope so, at least. All the way from Barbados to meet your passengers, by Sir Barty Maythorn's orders. And you're Captain Quog, I can see that. I've been hearing of you in the past few days from a friend. It was he who spotted you over an hour since by your sprung main-topmast."

At this moment, even while Captain Quog the navigator and young Cap-

tain Normanby the horse-soldier were shaking hands, Benison Dexter topped the rail and dropped lightly to the deck. He too uncovered and bowed to the after part of the barque. He too had a native hat and easy garments of white linen. But his young face was thin and grave instead of plump and smiling and his glance was somber instead of merry. He smiled with both lips and eyes, however, when he looked at his former skipper, Amos Quog.

"What happened to the whiskers, ye old ruffian?" he cried affectionately, cocking an eyebrow. "And all powdered an' polished! An' no quid in yer jaw. God bless my soul! I wouldn't know ye, me dear old lad, but for the roguish glint in yer eyes an' yer sprung main-top."

Amos Quog dropped the military gent and laid hold of Ben Dexter with both big hands.

"If it baint yerself!" he cried. "But ye look kinder peaked, lad! But welcome, welcome, ye dod-blasted desarter! I've been on the lookout for ye everywheres an' allus missin' ye by inches or ells; and now ye step aboard here where I never dropped hook but once before in me life, like a dumblasted harbor-master!"

"Lucky chance," said Benison, becoming entirely somber again quicker than the turn of a hand. "I move about, Quoggy—a variety of petty interests. It's the blunt I'm after—an' not too fussy as to how I come by it, neither. And I'm doing pretty well, thanky. Property an' dollars are beginning to stick to my fingers. One good haul now"—he leaned nearer and lowered his voice to a whisper—"and I'll be in a position to return to Boston an' hire lawyers an' accountants to investigate godly Jeremiah Dexter's affairs."

Captain Quog sobered too, in the blink of an eye.

"I'll be with ye, Ben, like I've allus said—but all in good time, lad, an' no goin' off at half-cock," he muttered.

Then, in better voice, he added: "An' now, gents, I'll present ye to the ladies."

The ladies expressed a desire to explore the town and, perhaps, the whole island. The aide-de-camp from Barbados said it was a prime idea, regarding Temperance Maythorn the while with shining eyes. Benison Dexter continued to stare to seaward, silent and detached. Captain Quog was in two minds about the delay and extra port dues involved, but a glance in his eyes from Miss Lowell's eyes, and his decision was made and his permission instantly given.

"One moment, if ye please!" protested Mr. Hiram Dexter.

EVERYONE, including Benison, was looking at him. He wanted to please the ladies, of course, but the impulse to show his authority and the importance of himself and his father was even stronger than that wish; and he had an idea that he might advance himself further in Tempy's and her aunt's esteem by impressing them rather than pleasing them. Where old Quog and the demmed soldier were downright sloppy, and poor knockabout Benison was simply dumb with envy, he would be the strong man, strong yet just. The ideal man of affairs.

"As this vessel's supercargo," he continued, "and as my father's agent generally—his representative aboard—and so indirectly responsible to Mr. Stephen Maythorn at Boston and to Sir Barty Maythorn at Barbados for the well-being of our—ah!—guest-passengers—I feel that it is my duty to insist upon the immediate resumption of our voyage, in the best interests of our passengers and guests as well as of the ship and cargo."

He paused. The others continued to eye him with a variety of expressions, but nobody spoke. Captain Quog's shaven jowls darkened from tan to mulberry.

"So I must request those for whom no provision for the southward passage has been made—namely, Mr. Benison Dexter and his servant or companion the black man—to return ashore without a moment's delay," he added.

A gurgle issued from Captain Quog, but it was Ben Dexter who acted and spoke. He took a step toward the master and said, "Leave this to me."

Turning half-left, he took another step and halted before his cousin. His thin face was as pale as its weathering permitted. His eyes appeared to be shrunken and as black and lusterless

The Bostonians and the English soldier crouched in the scuppers with their arms and gear. The schooner bumped and ground along the barque's side.

as coals. He spoke low and soft, but loud enough to carry around the little circle.

"Poor fool! Ye'd be better off all knave, like your sanctimonious papa. If we were ten years younger, I'd dust your jacket for ye. I'd swab the deck with ye. I should slap your face—but as well slap a mud-chub! Supercargo, is it? Papa's representative, is it? And the ladies may not go ashore? But Ben Dexter and his servant must go ashore? Harky to me! Mistress Lowell is responsible to her brother at Boston, an' Captain Normanby is responsible to Sir Barty Maythorn, an' Amos Quog is responsible for the ship an' her company to her owners—whoever they may be. Now go away, Cousin Hiram. Get out of my sight, ye squid, before I lose my temper an' heave ye overboard!"

Hiram Dexter trembled. He gasped and gagged. His thin lips twisted and his sweating, fat face was the color of putty.

"I'll notify—port authorities—"

Then Benison reached for him, and he turned and ran. Ben stood and looked after him with outflung arm and a livid smile. But the smile changed and passed in a moment, the arm fell and the eyes enlarged and brightened.

"Thanky, Ben," muttered Quog.

THE young man smiled gravely at the captain, bowed gravely to each of the others in turn, then left the high deck by the forward ladder.

"Will he do Mr. Hiram an injury?" asked Miss Lowell.

"No fear o' that, ma'am," replied the master. "Ben's no bully. Ben's a gentleman, an' honest too, even if he was expelled from Harvard College an' sent to sea by his uncle."

"He has a lovely smile, though sad," said Miss Lowell.

"Ben Dexter's a good fellah," said Captain Normanby.

"But I can't help but think that perhaps Hiram's actions were within his rights," said Temperance Maythorn, gently.

"Hoity-toity, my dear child!" exclaimed her aunt. "Within his rights? He was unmannerly to us and he even went so far as to defy Captain Quog."

"A demmed objectionable fellah," said the soldier.

The ladies went ashore at Nassau, squired by Captain Quog and Captain Normanby. Mr. Hatch was left in command. The Dexter cousins remained aboard, Hiram moping in the main cabin and Benison pacing the decks. Hiram made no move to communicate with the port authorities. Dearly as he would love to humiliate that outcast, he decided that, in consideration for his own hide, this was not the safest time to do it. He contented himself with the writing of a lengthy and venomous letter to his father.

The barque sailed again next day, with Ben Dexter and his servant still aboard. While ashore, Captain Quog had been advised against the Spanish Passage,—because two ships had been taken there lately by a piratical topsail-schooner,—and to make the longer and more difficult passage of the Galleon Cays and Long-boat Island. The captain consulted his mates and his ex-apprentice. All Mr. Hatch knew of the Galleon Cays passage was by hearsay and that it was tricky. Mr. Swim knew even less. Ben said that he had made the tricky passage both ways, in and out, a number of times, but always in small native craft.

"Could ye pilot us through, Ben?" asked Captain Quog.

"I could," said the melancholy youth. "The old girl's handy as a cat-boat and I've a good eye and memory for sea-marks an' landmarks. But, if ye want my advice, Quoggy, it's against it. Use yer imagination and put yerself in the pirate's place. If ye made two kills in ten days in the Spanish Passage, thus scaring all outbound shipping to the next best way to the southward, wouldn't ye shift to the Galleons an' Long-boat when ye went after the third prize?"

HIRAM DEXTER, who had been lurking close by all the while and listening with both ears, now joined the conference.

"Never mind that," he said. "Never mind what ye'd do if ye were the pirate—but do what any honest shipmaster would do, and act on the harbor-master's advice. Leave picturing yerself in the pirate's shoes to my cousin—it's maybe no strain on his imagination—an' follow official instructions. And when it comes to piloting, Boatswain Sam Small's the man. He knows the Galleon Cays like the palm of his hand. I've been talking to him."

"D'ye say so?" drawled Amos Quog. "Ye've been discussing our course with the bo'sun, hey? Mr. Samuel Small an' Mr. Supercargo Hiram Dexter have laid a course for Captain Amos Quog to sail, hey? Thanky both for nothin'! An' as for the advice o' pore old Dinky Jarge Jemmison, harbor-master of the port of Nassau—why, hell's bells, Dinky Jarge was a menace to navigation, till he married an' was give a berth ashore!"

He stopped talking, but continued to glare at Hiram Dexter.

"D'ye mean to take the Spanish Passage?" croaked Hiram.

"Ye heared me!" barked the master.

The mates and Benison Dexter looked relieved, but Hiram Dexter paled and trembled with anger.

"Ye'll answer for this, Amos Quog!" he croaked. "At Boston—if we live to get there—ye'll answer for yer madness—ye bewitched old fool!"

The big barque, after fifty hours of fine weather and light and variable winds, was practically clear of the Spanish Passage; and Captain Quog, pacing the high deck with Miss Lowell on his arm, was being congratulated on his wisdom and perspicacity in ignoring the advice of Nassau's harbor-master and the protests of Hiram Dexter. But Tempy Maythorn and Benison Dexter were not giving the barque's position a thought. They were on the port side, standing close together with elbows touching on the teakwood rail. They had stood so for an hour, turning to one another and murmuring, looking away at the shine and shake of little waves and turning inward to murmur again.

"I wondered if you'd forgotten me, or why you avoided me. You were the big boy at Miss Smither's dancing-class. You were too big to dance with me."

"And too bad."

"Yes, you were the big bad boy of my acquaintance. The tales that were told of you! They grew worse and worse."

"As I grew bigger and badder."

"But I never believed them!"

"Not when I was expelled from college and sent to sea?"

"No."

"Tales are still told of me, and more may be told in future. . . . I have my own way to make—and some things to avenge. I'm a lone wolf. Lone and lonely. . . . I hadn't forgotten you, Tempy. But ye're changed, no denying it."

"For the better, perhaps?"

"But you were always lovely. . . . Turn yer eyes away, girl—in the name of sanity—or I'll forget my degraded condition! Turn yer lips away, Tempy Maythorn—or God alone knows what I'll forget!"

She neither turned her head or veiled her eyes.

"An' take—an' have—to remember," she murmured.

He stooped—and at that moment an excited cry rang down from the look-out in the main-crosstrees. A sail to windward! Three tops'ls—two pointed gaff-tops'ls and one square and wide and higher. A tops'l-schooner—and a big one, by the Lord Harry! And shifting her helm, by Hell's hatches! Hornswoggled, by Judas!

Captain Quog and Benison Dexter faced each other just aft of the cabin skylight. The mates were bellowing from waist and forecastle-head, Quog had been bellowing from the poop-deck and all hands, including boatswain, chips and cooks, were aloft making sail.

"Looks like we was too damn' smart, Ben!" His big face was the color of old canvas.

"I could cut out my cursed tongue, old friend!"

The thin face was gray as ashes.

"But we don't know for sartin yet, lad. She aint showed her colors. Maybe we're mistaken."

Benison shook his head.

"I know her. Saw her off Barbuda once, an' once off Crab Reef. It's her—the pirate—God forgive me!"

NOW they were joined by Hiram Dexter and Captain Normanby.

"Put that fellow in irons!" croaked Hiram, pointing a quivering finger at his cousin.

All three looked at him, each with a particular expression.

"The fellah's quite mad," said the soldier, indicating Hiram with a nod. "I've had an earful of it, by gad! He says that ship's full of pirates an' Ben's their informer an' agent."

"And I repeat it!" screamed Hiram.

"Shut up!" said Benison.

"Don't be alarmed, dear Ben. We are to be married on Saturday next," Tempy said.

Shifting his glance back and forth from Amos Quog to the military man, he continued, in a low voice:

"She's full of pirates, ye can lay to that. And she can outsail us on any wind. But we can crack on, an' make it a chase. The longer the chase, the longer they have to get drunk in. They cut throats on rum. I've made a study of 'em. All their courage is keg courage. They can't board a ship without it. So crack on while ye may, Amos. And then we'll fight."

"No!" croaked Hiram. "No fighting! 'Twould but enrage the devils. Give 'em the ship—give 'em everything—and they'll spare our lives."

Benison Dexter sneered at his cousin, then turned to Captain Quog.

"You know better than that, my friend," he said, "—or do I have to take command here?" he asked quietly.

"Ay, Ben, that much o' pirates I do know—though not as much as yerself, maybe," replied the master, in a queer voice and with a queer look at his ex-apprentice. "We'll run while we may an' then we'll fight," he added.

TWO hours later, the schooner fired her bow-chaser. Though the shot plunged short, Captain Quog sent the ladies and their maids into the hold, with the cargo. The schooner ran up a black flag with a white skull and crossbones and fired again. That shot was wide to starboard. A third was wide to port. . . . Even the gunners were drunk, seemingly, for every one of six more shots was either high or wide or short.

"Drunk as they be, they'll run us aboard in twenty minutes," said Benison Dexter. "Hark to 'em howl; that's to scare us—so now we must show 'em we're scairt. Haul down yer colors, Amos, an' heave-to so they'll quit shooting; and, for old sake's sake, don't eye me as if ye didn't trust me!"

"Of course he trusts you, Ben! But must we strike our colors?" asked Captain Normanby.

"It's how we've got to play this hand, Jack, the way the cards were dealt," replied Ben.

Amos Quog struck his colors and the big barque was hove-to. The sixty cutthroats howled like wolves and madmen. The thirty-four Bostonians and the English soldier crouched in the starboard scuppers with their miscellaneous arms and gear. The schooner sheered off, bumped and ground along the barque's starboard side. Howls went up, and grappling-irons drunkenly heaved, and blocks and tackles and scuns'l spars came banging down. No rail of the schooner's reached within five feet of the big barque's corresponding rail. The pirates would have to climb—but who minded a bit of a scramble when the pleasure of cutting the throats of unresisting cowards and fools was the reward? The bloodthirsty, rum-soaked howls of anticipation and triumph were deafening. . . . The crouched barquesmen straightened their knees and backs, and heaved and flung; and the howling of the pirates took on new notes. The first heave and fling showered the scramblers with boiling water, bubbling tar, spare yards and spars and three teakwood gratings. Howls thinned to screams and thickened to grunts and gurgles. Pistols and muskets were discharged from the schooner's deck and the barque's rail. Then, under Benison Dexter's direction, the galley fire was fetched by himself and Jack Normanby and two seamen, on capstan-bars, and heaved overside and on top of the spreading hot pitch on the schooner's deck.

"Sheer off now!" shouted Benison Dexter. "Haul clear an' square away—or—"

He knelt slowly, with seeming caution, one knee at a time.

"Or we might catch afire too," he said, in a small voice.

He sagged forward, with both hands on the deck.

"Reckon I'm hit somewheres," he added, apologetically. His arms wilted under him. He sank to his breast and rolled over on his back.

The bloodthirsty, rum-soaked howls of anticipation were deafening.

DR. AJAX FINN of the Nassau garrison took a slug of lead out of Benison Dexter.

"If he's still alive after that he's sure got a right an' a chance to live happy ever after," said the perspiring surgeon, mopping his brow.

Benison Dexter was still alive; and he was even more so when Temperance Maythorn and her Aunt Priscilla came to his room in the Marine Hospital. Temperance knelt beside his cot.

"We brought you back here after the battle, to the nearest doctor," she whispered.

She read his eyes for his questions and answered them one by one.

"There wasn't much more to the battle. The schooner drifted off, in flames. Some of them tried to come aboard in boats, but we bilged the boats. I was on deck then. So was Aunty Jess. . . . Don't try to talk, Ben. Nobody but your detestable cousin ever suspected you of being a pirate."

"I was considering it—when I met you," he breathed.

"Don't try to talk, poor boy; I heard you talk in your delirium. Now listen carefully to me, dear—and don't excite yourself. The *Boston Beacon* and everyone—Aunty Jess and all—are completing the voyage to Barbados. But I am remaining here, with you, until their return. But don't be alarmed, dear Ben. It will be quite proper—and don't argue, dear—because we are to be married on Saturday next. It is all arranged. But you mustn't blame me, Ben, for making the arrangements without consulting you, because I didn't make them. That was Aunty's work. And Captain Quog's. It's to be a double wedding, you see. Do you forgive me, Ben? But you mustn't try to talk!"

Even if he tried to talk, nothing came of it. Her lips against his saw to that.

Stagecoach versus Ship

The story of a famous race

by J. A. RICKARD

IF an old-time sportsman should arise from his grave and attend the Kentucky Derby, or some other leading race of our time, he would probably say: "But that is not equal to one between a steamship and some mules that I saw, back in 1859. Ah, but that was *some* race!"

He would be referring to a contest between the Overland Mail Stage Lines and the Eastern Steam Navigation Company, in which the mules of John Butterfield were pitted against the *Great Eastern,* commanded by Captain Harrison, in a cross-continent or around-the-continent race to San Francisco.

It all started when Butterfield and Harrison met at a dinner in New York in the summer of 1859, and each of them talked and bragged too much about the speed of his particular pet. Both of them liked to brag, and both had money to back up their talking.

Harrison was justly proud of his ship, for with its overall length of 679 feet, its eleven big engines, and its seven thousand feet of sail, it was by far the largest steamer afloat at that time. It had been built for his company in London and could carry one thousand passengers, five thousand tons of merchandise, and fifteen thousand tons of coal at one time without being overloaded. It was so large that it had required three months to launch it, and it had made many trips to the East and across the Atlantic, although it had been afloat for only two years.

Butterfield was just as proud of his stage lines, which had been in operation since September 15, 1858. As President of the Southern Pacific Mail Company he had been awarded a Government contract to carry the mail from St. Louis to San Francisco, with the added right to carry passengers and merchandise. His Concord coaches were pulled by horses, from the East to Fort Belknap, Texas, and by mules the rest of the way through the West. Each coach carried eight or ten passengers easily, not counting the bulky mail pouches and five or six hundred pounds of merchandise. Their leather springs, many plies thick, made them the easiest-riding vehicles in existence. Nobody, it seemed, could conceive of anything more comfortable than a Concord coach.

Butterfield had a right to talk about the stage trip as a whole, too. From St. Louis the journey was to Memphis, Little Rock, Fort Smith, Preston (Texas), on to Fort Chadbourne, Fort Bliss (now El Paso), and hence to Tucson, Fort Yuma, and finally to San Francisco. It cost a hundred dollars to make the 2759-mile journey, and letters were carried for ten cents an ounce. There were stations every fifteen or twenty miles apart, and at each station was a keeper's house, a blacksmith shop, and stables for the animals; with eating-houses for passengers and drivers at convenient places. Barring Indian trouble, the whole trip could be made in twenty-five days or less.

But Captain Harrison soon grew tired of hearing his friend brag about his fast mules and his wonderful stage line. He had finished his meal and was sitting back puffing on his cigar, trying not to listen too much to Butterfield's words. Finally he leaned forward and said:

"Why, the *Great Eastern* can start from New York and go all the way around South America—and beat your stagecoaches to San Francisco!"

"I'll bet you can't," was Butterfield's retort.

"How much will you bet?" was Harrison's challenge.

Butterfield measured his opponent a minute and replied: "One hundred thousand dollars."

There was a sudden stillness at the table, for the other guests were sporting men too. Eventually one of them laughed nervously and remarked:

"There you are, Captain—and what a whale of a race it will be!"

Captain Harrison was game, but he would have to get the permission of his company before concluding the details. That suited Butterfield, who suggested that the race start three months from that date. The judges, stakeholders, and all the other conditions of the race were agreed upon, and in due time the officials of the steamship company approved. Butterfield, being majority stockholder of his company, had only to get his own permission.

Both sides made elaborate preparations for the race. The *Great Eastern* was overhauled and put in shipshape condition. Her engines and her sails had everything done to them that needed to be done. A full crew of experienced seamen was obtained, and they were promised a generous slice of the wager if they should win. The course was charted to the last mile, to make it as short as possible and to see that no delays would be encountered. A thousand passengers booked for the voyage, for one of the conditions was that both sides should carry normal loads. Some of them no doubt had wagers of their own and wanted to be along to see the voyage go off as it should.

Butterfield made even more elaborate preparations: He personally went over the route and inspected every station. He hired capable drivers and stationed his fastest animals all along the way. He bought new stagecoaches or repaired old ones, and everywhere he told his employees and their friends about the coming event and encouraged them to make wagers of their own. The news spread to the towns near the stage lines, and it got into the newspapers of the day. Pretty soon the whole country was talking about the coming event. The sporting fever of the country, always easily aroused, climbed rapidly, and before long people were talking more about the race than they were about the slavery issue and the coming Civil War. Side bets were so numerous that one newspaper of the day estimated that more than a million dollars was being wagered on the contest, with Butterfield's mules on the favorite end. The odds probably came nearer representing sentiment than cold judgment.

At the day and hour agreed upon, the race got under way. With one of Butterfield's friends present, the *Great Eastern* steamed out of New York harbor and struck her course toward Cape Horn, with a thousand cheering passengers on board. With one of Harrison's men present, Butterfield's Concord coach started from St. Louis, while a throng of well-wishers sped them on their trip.

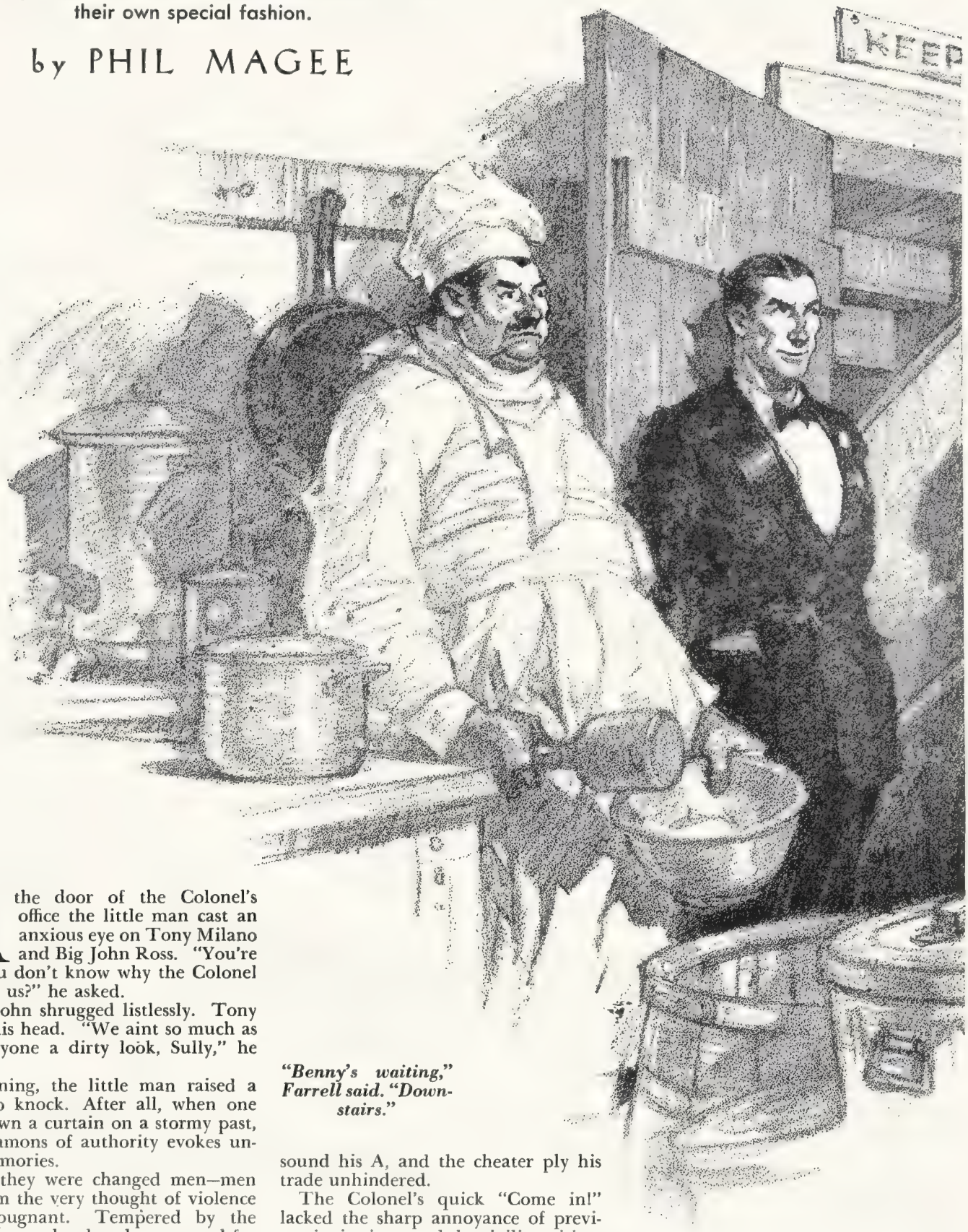
NOT so much could be known about the voyage, of course, but at every station along the stage line, crowds gathered. Where a team was to be changed it was at its place before the stage came in sight. When a cloud of dust announced its coming, the crowd was pushed back so as to enable the drivers to unhook traces and put in fresh animals with the least loss of time. If coaches were to be changed, the new coach was waiting and ready, mailbags and merchandise were hurriedly thrown aboard, and passengers were hustled aboard the new coach with hardly a break in the journey.

Excitement mounted, and the crowds grew, as the coaches sped over the last laps of the journey five days ahead of time—and when on the twentieth day the stage pulled up at San Francisco, there was a grand celebration led by Butterfield himself.

For he had won the race. Thirty-six hours later the *Great Eastern* cast anchor in the harbor, only to learn that her rival was already there.

Our Soldiers Three find their return to civil life impeded by sundry crude characters—and deal with them after their own special fashion.

by PHIL MAGEE



"Benny's waiting," Farrell said. "Downstairs."

AT the door of the Colonel's office the little man cast an anxious eye on Tony Milano and Big John Ross. "You're sure you don't know why the Colonel sent for us?" he asked.

Big John shrugged listlessly. Tony shook his head. "We aint so much as give anyone a dirty look, Sully," he said.

Frowning, the little man raised a hand to knock. After all, when one has drawn a curtain on a stormy past, the summons of authority evokes uneasy memories.

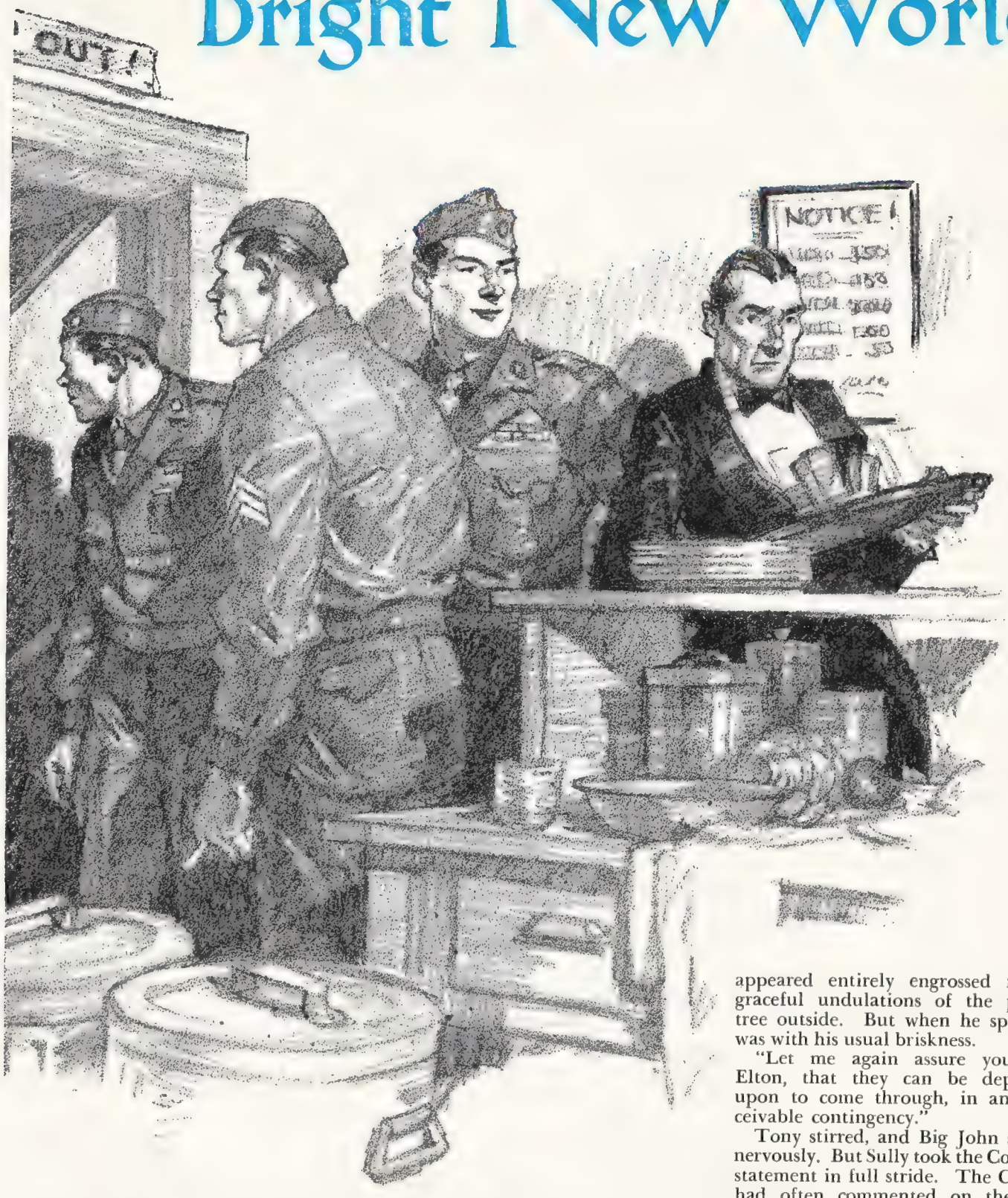
And they were changed men—men to whom the very thought of violence was repugnant. Tempered by the heat of many battles, they yearned for peace and quiet, and amiable association with their countrymen. Unscrupulous tavernkeepers need no longer tremble at their presence. And for all of them, the braggart might sound his A, and the cheater ply his trade unhindered.

The Colonel's quick "Come in!" lacked the sharp annoyance of previous invitations, and the civilian visitor who sat by the Colonel's desk nodded affably as they entered.

"Sir," the little man announced, "Sergeants Sullivan, Ross and Milano report to the Battalion Commander."

"At ease," the Colonel said. "This is Mr. Elton, of Elton Enterprises, Incorporated." He turned to his guest. "These are the men I spoke of, Mr. Elton."

Bright New World



A swift appraisal of Tony's two-hundred-and-thirty pound bulk brought a grin to Mr. Elton's face. And he fairly beamed in contemplation of Big John's six-foot-four-inch figure. He looked at Sully. "I see what you mean," he murmured.

"We went through part of the African, and all of the Sicilian and Italian campaign together," the Colonel said. "Next week they return to civil life."

Somewhat startled, Sully thought he detected a wistful note in his commanding officer's tone.

The soft breeze of Southern California filtered through the open window, and for a moment the Colonel appeared entirely engrossed in the graceful undulations of the pepper tree outside. But when he spoke, it was with his usual briskness.

"Let me again assure you, Mr. Elton, that they can be depended upon to come through, in any conceivable contingency."

Tony stirred, and Big John shifted nervously. But Sully took the Colonel's statement in full stride. The Colonel had often commented on their dependability. It was true that these comments had frequently contained an implication that what he could depend on them for, might bring about his premature retirement. But of course those days were now behind them.

"Sullivan," the Colonel said, "Mr. Elton is in a position to make you boys a very attractive offer."

"Here?" Sully questioned, trying to control his eagerness. "Here? In town?" It was two years now, since they'd last been stationed here. And now as then it was the place of their choice. The place in which they had determined to reënter civil life. But not as yet had they solved the manner of their entry.

Mr. Elton nodded. "We back and supply places of entertainment," he said. "We secure a lease, furnish, remodel, and completely stock the establishment. We then support the opening with our State-wide advertising. Naturally we do not make these expenditures until we have a satisfactory contract for operation."

"And the contract?" Sully asked.

"Requires that catering service, dining-room, and bar supplies be obtained from our Los Angeles house," Mr. Elton explained. "Aside from that, you are in business for yourself. We function solely as your wholesalers. The contract provides for repayment of our initial outlay over a period of years, the payments determined on your gross."

TONY stared; Big John's eyes widened; Sully's lips were dry. "It sounds terrific, sir," he said; for while his boldest hope had been a business of their own, he'd thought of nothing on this scale. It *was* terrific. An offer anyone would jump at. Then why—

"Mr. Elton," he said, "before you make this investment, you understand that our experience has been pretty well confined to combat soldiering?"

The Colonel coughed. Mr. Elton smiled. "I've discussed that angle with your Colonel," he said. "I'm convinced that you're the men I need. I can furnish you a business manager for as long as you need him. There are circumstances which require quite a different talent. You see, the investment has already been made."

"I don't quite follow you, sir," Sully said.

"We have the lease," Mr. Elton said. "We've opened twice, both times under experienced operators, and both times unsuccessfully."

"You mean that a really nice place doesn't get a play in this town?"

"Oh, no. We had an excellent turnout, the first night or two. After that, things happened."

"Would you kick that around a bit, Mr. Elton?" Tony requested.

"Yah," Big John cut in. "What kind of things?"

"Our catering trucks forced off the road; half of our musicians failing to show up, and the others afraid to talk."

"And your guests upset by unaccountable disturbances?" Sully said.

"Why, yes. But how did you—"

"Easy," Tony said. "You bring in outsiders to run the place, and they forget to check in with the local mob, that's all."

"Yah," Big John agreed. "And as I remember it, some of these local lads are very crude characters. But don't let it bother you another minute, Mr. Elton. There aint a slicker living who can get a curve past Sully."

"John!" the little man snapped. But the boys were right. You can't crash any town without a certain deference to the local institutions. He looked at Mr. Elton. "And you think, sir, that we might—er—circumvent these unfortunate occurrences?"

"I do," Mr. Elton stated. "But look it over before you decide." He held out a ring of keys. "The Club's at 700 Portola Road. Take a run out there, and we'll talk again tomorrow."

Outside, the two big soldiers hugged their small companion. "Gee, Sully," Tony said, "to think the Old Man'd recommend us for this!"

"The Old Man knows who the solid citizens are," Big John insisted smugly. "Think of it," he sighed. "A class joint, me in a monkey suit, and the dolls breaking the door down to get inside."

"Let's go," the little man said soberly. "We have a job of work to do." For this was far too good to be easy, and they who sought for peace and quiet must walk softly among their fellows, and let that fact be known.

But his caution could not withstand John's gayety, or Tony's solid logic.

"Suppose Bumboat Benny, Deuce Daniels and Nick Napoliana are still running this town?" Tony argued. "Those jerks couldn't compete with a nice place, but they'd give it a hotfoot just to prove their nuisance value."

"Yeah," Big John supported, "especially if the new guys snooted 'em a bit. With us, it'll be different. We'll bust right in their deadfalls, give 'em a small play and a large hello, and first thing you know, they'll be rolling out the red carpet."

"Sure, Sully," Tony said, "the old oil! And when we open, we'll have 'em in a time or two."

"I don't know about having 'em in," Big John said. "Deuce might be all right, or even Nick, but Benny—we'd have to feed him in the kitchen."

The little man smiled. For weeks he'd tried not to stare at them, and had been sometimes conscious that they stared at him. Now it was good to watch the weariness vanish from their faces. Big John was sparkling in a way that Sully hadn't seen since before those last tough days at Conselice, and the dreary weeks in the hospital at Rome. And when they dropped off a bus at First and Broadway, he noticed that Tony's limp had almost disappeared.

For a moment they watched the early evening shadows envelop the city's buildings.

The little man breathed deeply. Their fighting days were over. Their share of the bright new world was just ahead. This was their town. Everything would be all right—he was sure of that.

Illustrated by Raymond Sisley

He hailed a taxi, and they climbed in and sat down. "Seven hundred Portola Road" he said.

The driver made no move to pull away. "You must be new in town," he said. "That joint's been dark for weeks, bud."

Sully settled on the seat cushions. "Please," he chided. "All we want is transportation."

"Look, bud," the driver said, "I'll take you to a real joint. I know all the—"

"John!" the little man complained.

Leaning forward, Big John placed a hand beneath the driver's chin. "Clarence," he said, "Sully doesn't like to argue So let us go to 700 Portola Road, huh?"

Sully nodded his approval, for Big John's voice was gentle, and his suggestion had not been coupled with an offer to remove the driver's ears. An excellent beginning, and an attitude that should serve them well in their effort to establish pleasant footing. . . .

Rolling along the bay shore, he wondered if Nick, and Deuce, and Benny were still in town. It might be simpler, if a new crowd had taken over. "I hope the local boys will not remember us unkindly," he said.

"Why should they?" Big John demanded. "Somebody had to straighten 'em out."

"I was thinking of our more personal contact with these characters," Sully said.

"Oh, yes," Tony remembered, "you mean like the time John gets the padded tab at Benny's. That was bad. Nobody but John'd think of making Benny eat it. And the other time at Nick's, when John thinks the bouncers are giving him the eye. But those are things we have to put up with, Sully. John can't help it if he aint got no judgment."

"Judgment!" Big John roared. "To *me* he says that, Sully! Me who useta spend half my time watching to see he don't put the lump on some citizen and disgrace us all. Who tears up Deuce Daniels' crap game?"

Big John's fingers closed on the driver's jacket. "Clarence," the big one said reprovingly, "we don't like to hear you call our drum a joint."

"That was different," Tony said stiffly. "He cheats me blind at blackjack, and then gets stuffy when I put my own dice in the crap game."

"Gentlemen," Sully remonstrated, "all that took place two years ago. We are changed men. Things are different now." But he was pleased, for this was the first such discourse he'd heard in many weeks—the first indication of return to normalcy. No longer were they listless, drawn, and haggard. Maybe rehabilitation would not be as difficult as he'd imagined.

Turning from the bay, the taxi climbed a winding road until it leveled off, high above the water. Parking in a spacious driveway, the cabby nodded toward a tile-roofed structure on their right.

Though expecting something nice, Sully was not prepared for this wide two-storied stucco. Whistling softly, he looked at the Moorish grill before each window, the redwood arch, the wishing-well, and the six stone steps leading to the massive double door.

They climbed the steps, John and Tony silent while Sully tried the keys. They stepped inside, Big John fumbling for a light switch.

A dome lamp whitened in the hall, illumining the entrance to cloak- and powder-rooms, and the long bar to the right. John tried another switch, and a soft glow flowed swiftly up the walls of the dining room beyond. In the subdued light they could see the dull shimmer of the dance floor, and the velvety sheen of the drapes before the dais.

Sully moistened his lips. Tony's breath came heavily, and even John was speechless. "And it's all ours!" the little man said softly. "Let's go. We still have things to do."

The driver eyed them curiously. "What's the gag?" he asked. "You guys casing that joint?"

Big John's fingers closed on the driver's jacket. "Clarence," the big one said reprovingly, "we don't like to hear you call our drum a joint."

"You mean you guys are gonna open this place?"

Sully nodded. "Tell me," he said, "is Bumboat Benny still in town? And Deuce Daniels, and Nick Napoliana?"

The cab-driver snickered. "You're gonna open this joint?" he scoffed. "And you don't even know whether

Benny, and Deuce, and Nick are still in town! I'm laughing."

"Suppose we laugh together," the little man suggested.

"Look, bud, in this town when we speak of the big three, we don't mean Truman, Stalin and Attlee, get it?"

"Perfectly," Sully said. "Turn him loose, John."

"Where to now?" Tony questioned. "Benny's?"

Sully shook his head. Benny had always been top dog. To go direct to him might offend the others. "We'll work up to Benny," he said. "Take us to Nick's," he ordered.

Outside Nick's, the driver kept his motor running.

"Cut it," Sully said. "We'll be using you all evening."

"Oh, no, you won't," the driver contradicted. "I aint getting involved in anything."

Sully signaled, and Big John put one hand on the ignition key, and the other on the driver. "Clarence," he said kindly, "sometimes I think there's a little barber in you. But you'll get over it. Come on."

AS they entered, a dinner-jacketed figure hurried forward, his smile of welcome dissolving in a frown of recognition.

"Why, Nick," Sully said, "this is charming! John, Tony, take this table right here. Nick will be our guest. We have lots of important things to talk about."

"The tables are all reserved," Nick said, "and you and me've got nothing to talk about, Sullivan."

"Nick," the little man bantered, "don't tell me that a big shot like you would hold a two-year grudge. We've changed. You wouldn't know us. Pull out a chair for Nick, boys."

Motioning to a waiter, Nick sat down. The waiter relayed the signal, and two burly strong-arms moved forward warily.

"My, my," Tony said, "the same two stumblebums! The manpower shortage must've hit you hard, Nick!"

"Yah," Big John sympathized. "I remember the last time I cracked their skulls together. One of 'em didn't have no ring."

"Gentlemen," Sully rebuked them, "you are referring to the employees of an esteemed gentleman, soon to be our competitor."

"Aw, Sully," Big John said, "Nick knows Tony don't mean nothing by those cracks." He waved as the two strong-arms arrayed themselves behind Nick's chair. "Hiya, fellers," he grinned, "bit anybody lately?"

Nick's fingers drummed the tabletop. "A competitor, did you say, Sullivan?" he asked.

"I did," Sully acknowledged. Quickly he told Nick of their prospects, and their strong desire for amicable relations with those similarly engaged.

"Where is this place?"

"Seven hundred Portola Road."

Nick's smile was mirthless. "Benny won't like that," he said.

"Why not?" Tony asked. "It won't cut into any of you boys. We're shooting strictly at the carriage trade."

"It's been tried before," Nick said. "Benny isn't going to like it."

"That's why we came to see you first, Nick," Sully flattered. "We thought you'd put in a word for us. How about it?"

Nick's smile broadened slightly. "I'll talk to Benny," he conceded.

"Swell," Big John enthused. "And just to show you that there aint no hard feelings, Nick, we'll even take a belt at your ulcer fluid . Waiter," he hollered, "bring us seven whisky sours. You still making 'em out o' carbon tetrachloride, Nick?"

Sully shut his eyes. Still, it was significant that the question had not appeared to bother Nick, and Sully congratulated himself on the order of approach. Nick was smart enough to know that he'd been the principal contributor to all their past misunderstandings. So too were Deuce and Benny, but they were hardier characters, and as such, more inclined to be vindictive.

The little man raised his glass. "To all of us!" he murmured. Behind his back he crossed the fingers of his one free hand.

Big John sipped and shuddered. Turning his head, he intercepted a sympathetic glance from an adjoining table. "Just hang on, babe," he counseled. "In less'n two weeks you won't have to drink this garbage any more." He smiled at her escort. "We're opening a real place at 700 Portola Road," he explained. "Don't forget the number, 700 Portola Road."

"We must be going," Sully cut in hastily.

"Benny's?" Nick asked.

"We'll drop in on Deuce first," Sully said. He thrust a hand in his pocket, his fingers closing on a wad of bills, and brushing against a tightly wrapped two-dollar roll of nickels.

The little man suppressed a smile at this reminder of the days gone by, when clutched firmly in his fist the roll of nickels had caused sundry uncouth characters to forget his lack of stature. But trouble only comes to those who seek it. Those days were well behind him now. The symbol of his youth would make a nice tip for the taxi-driver.

He tossed a bill on the table. "So-long, Nick," he said. "We'll see you soon?"

"Soon," Nick promised, his smile very much in evidence.

"Nick," the driver called, "I'd like you to remember that I aint with these guys."

"Clarence," Big John reproved, "if there's one thing I can't stand, it's guys who are always running off at the chin." He hustled the driver to the door. Following their tall companion, neither Tony nor Sully saw Nick hurry to a phone.

At Daniels' place, the driver made another try. "Look," he said. "How about paying me off? I aint comfortable with you guys. You look like slug-stoppers to me."

"I am surprised that a man of your occupation could have so little discernment," Sully said. "I am toying with the idea of engaging you permanently Bring him along, John."

THEIR entrance created no commotion, and not until they'd mounted to the second floor, did they see anyone they knew.

A guard stood in the doorway of the stud-room.

"Good evening, Bill," the little man said. "It's nice to see you again."

That Bill was not entirely in agreement was evidenced by the speed with which he whirled to face them. One shoulder dipping, he clawed at his hip.

Moving easily, Tony wrapped an arm around the guard. "Bill," he said

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pleasantly, "you been seeing too many B pictures."

"Naw," Big John disagreed. "It's just that Bill's impulsive, huh, Sully?"

Sully grinned. "Bill," he said, "the old days are over. Things are different now. We want to talk to Deuce. Is he inside?"

The guard nodded sullenly, and Sully spoke to Tony. "Maybe you'd better stay here and keep Bill company."

Deuce Daniels looked up as they entered, and despite his eagerness to please, Sully could not help smiling at the gambler's struggle to maintain a fancied resemblance to Mr. Humphrey Bogart.

Big John expounded on the fallacy of bucking games of chance "The bald-headed guy is the house-man," he said. "It's doubtful if he could even deal himself a hand of solitaire without his equipment."

Passing the deal to a house-man, Deuce came toward them. Ignoring John, he looked at Sully. "It's been a long time, Sullivan," he said. "But not long enough. Get out!"

"You don't understand, Deuce," Sully opened. "We're here on business."

"Business?" Deuce objected "Business with me? You and your trained seals? And where's the other one?" he demanded.

"Out in the hall, talking to Bill," Sully said, not too discouraged by the gambler's hostility. After all, their score was longer here, and Deuce a much hardier character than Nick. Let him blow off a little steam.

"Yah," Big John added. "Him and Tony are cutting up old touches. We always liked Bill. A nice boy—and rugged? Why, last time we were in here, Tony had to hit him twice."

"John!" the little man snapped.

Shamefaced, Big John moved away, the taxi-driver in his grasp. But John's shame was apt to be a fleeting thing, and Sully would have preferred to have the big one within radius of control. Still those who would have a bill of goods to sell must show no lack of ease. Disarmingly, he smiled at Deuce.

"Sullivan," Deuce said, "whatever it is, I don't want any."

"That's where you're wrong," the little man assured him. Tactfully he explained their missions, the explanation necessitating some slight mention of the past. This Sully handled with a commendable implication of regret for any inconvenience Deuce had suffered at their hands.

HE did not expect Deuce to understand they'd needled his cheaters for fun alone, and tangled with his strong-arms for the laughs. But Deuce could not deny that his style of play had been a challenge to those untempered by the storm of battle. And in all fairness, he must remember that they'd always paid for everything they broke.

Deuce clicked a thumb against his teeth. "It might be worth something not to have you in my hair," he drawled.

The little man grinned amiably. This was not exactly what he wanted, but lasting peace can spring from just such small beginnings. "You really haven't got it yet," he said, "but—"

"I think I have," the gambler said. "I'll put in a call to Benny."

"When?" Sully asked hopefully. "Now?"

"Yes," Deuce snapped. "Right after you get that big slob out of here."

Startled, Sully realized that he'd forgotten John, always a dangerous omission.

A tiny blonde beside him, Big John expounded on the fallacy of bucking games of chance. Unfortunately John's voice failed to match his grace of manner, and the dealer's head and face were very red.

"The bald-headed guy is the house-man," Big John said. "It's doubtful if he could even deal himself a hand of solitaire without his equipment. He uses sandpaper, sometimes, other times a thumbtack tip. Whichever it is, it's under that bandage on his thumb."

"John," Sully said, "we'll be going."

Big John smiled at the tiny blonde. "Don't forget that address now, honey. Seven hundred Portola Road. One look, and you'll never give this dump another play."

"John!" the little man barked. Collecting Tony, he hurried down the stairs.

"How'd Deuce take it, Sully?" Tony asked.

"It's hard for him to realize we've changed," Sully said. "But I think he's willing to go for an armed truce."

"That'll do for a starter," Tony said.

"Yah," Big John said. "We going to bust right over to Benny's?"

Sully shook his head. "We'll give Deuce a chance to call him first."

"Look, bud," the driver pleaded, "being seen with you guys is doing me no good. How about getting another cab?"

"Clarence," Big John said, "we aint had time to set up a grievance committee yet. But when we do, you can bleed all over 'em. Come on, we'll buy you a beer."

In one convulsive heave Sully ripped the table from in front of Benny.

Choosing a small café, they dawdled over their beer, Sully trying to preserve an outward calm, Big John grinning hugely, and a broad smile erasing the tired lines in Tony's face.

Looking at the companions of his choice, a warm glow replaced the little man's impatience. Their battle weariness forgotten, their faces mirrored his excitement. For tomorrow they'd see Mr. Elton, and next week they'd be in business for themselves. He sighed. In business for themselves. . . New interests, far removed from strife.

BY now, Deuce would have had his talk with Benny, who was smarter than Deuce, smarter, and tougher-fibred, even less likely to understand the change that comes to men of combat. Maybe it was better that way. All peace begins with armistice, and remembering them as he must, Benny was too smart to risk his furnishings to satisfy his animosity.

Glancing at his watch, he reached for the check. "Let's go," he said, and again his fingers brushed the roll of nickels.

At Benny's, the driver cut his motor. "Look, bud," he said, and there was resignation in his voice, "if you guys don't come out, who's gonna pay me?"

"I'm afraid Clarence aint got the right attitude," Big John complained.

"He'll learn," the little man said. "Let's go."

Sully's practiced ear caught a slight break in the music as they entered. They'd be well remembered here—here where neither Benny's bandsmen nor his waiters earned their bread through art alone. An icy tingle racing up his back, he watched a waiter work his way toward them, sidestepping dancing couples.

"Flat-nose Farrell," Tony whispered.

"Yah," Big John said. "Hiya, Flat-nose?"

The waiter jerked his head. "This way," he said.

Squeezing past the dancers, and the closely packed tables, they followed the waiter to the kitchen. He stopped before a corner door, and Sully recognized the entrance to the cellar that Benny called his "conference-room."

"Benny's waiting," Farrell told them. "Down there."

Sully smiled, and Farrell swung the door wide open.

With John and Tony at his heels, the little man walked down the stairs. The conference-room. . . Trust Benny to lay it on. But Benny could be depended on to take the percentage player's choice. And as Tony said, that would do for a starter.

Behind him, Sully heard a bolt shoot home, and Farrell's heavy feet pounding on the stairs. The icy tingle extended to his fingers. His eyes narrowed, but only for a moment. After all, Farrell had probably bolted

the door from habit, and habit is a powerful thing.

Relaxed, the little man smiled engagingly. Moving forward, he too succumbed to habit, and carefully scanned the layout.

The door they'd entered was the only means of exit, and the sound of revelry from above a distant murmur. Benny sat behind a table, and gathered round him Sully saw Nick Napoliana and his two bouncers, Deuce Daniels and his floor-guard.

"Good evening, Benny," Sully said, as Flat-nose Farrell took a place beside his employer. "I guess Nick and Deuce have told you—"

"That you want to open at 700 Portola?" Benny interrupted, his fat stomach pressing against the table, his fat face expressionless under the overhead lights.

"Yes," Sully offered, trying to down his revulsion at the thought of doing business with a man like Bumboat Benny. There'd been a time when—but that was all behind him now. And if this was the price of peace, why then—

"Ever occur to you why we didn't let that joint operate?" Benny demanded.

Sully nodded. "Matter of pride, wasn't it, Benny? They didn't come to see you before they opened."

"That's part of it," Benny acknowledged. "The other part is that with no class joint operating, we get any carriage trade that don't go out of town."

"It can't mean a great deal to you, Benny," Sully said.

"Naw," Big John cut in, "not with the traps *you* run."

"John," the little man said, "I'll do the talking."

"Sure," Benny taunted, "let Sullivan do the talking. He always did, didn't he?"

"Benny," Sully tried again, "we've already squared ourselves with Nick and Deuce." But even as he said it, Sully saw Nick's sneer, and the thin hard smile on Deuce's face.

"So you squared yourself with Nick and Deuce, did you?" Benny scoffed.

FRANKLY puzzled, Sully stared at Benny. Men like Nick, and Deuce, and Benny deal in treachery, their actions cloaked in shadows, their strength in hired strong-arms. Yet Benny's manner was an open challenge.

"We're listening, Benny," he said.

Benny laughed unpleasantly.

"Kind of new for you to be listening, aint it, Sullivan?"

The little man moistened his lips, watching.

"I won't keep you waiting," Benny said. "I'll give it to you quick and sweet. Two years ago this town was full of soldiers. We were hauling in the dough. Then you stick your nose in."

He leaned forward, his flat face quivering. "Nick's liquor is lousy, you say. And Deuce's games are crooked. And my waiters are too careless with their arithmetic. We try to do business with you. We make you a nice offer to stay away. But no. This is your outfit, you say. They get polite treatment, or else."

Panting, he paused for breath. "So you tip us over, time and time again. You shut Deuce down so hard the cops close him for a month. And me and Nick spend half our time buying new furniture. Then you go away."

His palms hot and moist, Sully shifted his feet.

"And over there you get the starch knocked out of you," Benny jeered. "And now you're back, *all washed up.*"

The little man's mouth went dry. "All washed up?" So that was their interpretation of his offer. Behind him he heard Tony's muffled curse, and Big John's heavy breathing. But he could not bear to look at them. Blood pounding in his temples, he stared at this fat animal who couldn't understand the weariness that comes from months of battle, and at these men who thought a peaceful overture could only stem from weakness.

Deuce's smile was wider now, and Nick's grin a thing of triumph.

"Get going," Benny ordered. "You are through—you're all washed up."

Afraid to look at John or Tony, Sully put both hands on the table. His stomach churning, he remembered the bleakness of their faces before Mr. Elton held out this bright new world to all of them.

In one convulsive heave, he ripped the table from in front of Benny. Better one sharp pain than months of self-reproach. "Let's go," he snapped, his eyes on Benny's paunch.

John and Tony charged, Big John's long arms booming, Tony hooking as he stepped.

Benny struggled to his feet, and Sully slashed a palm-edge right and left across the fat man's stomach. Gasping, Benny folded forward, and Sully smashed both hands solidly on Benny's head.

Tony grunted with his hook, and Flat-nose Farrell's shoulders slid along the floor. Whirling, Tony drove Daniels' floor-guard to the wall.

Nick and both his bouncers tried to check John's charge, while Deuce edged around, swirling a blackjack in his hand.

Sully caught a glimpse of Tony's face, as Daniels' floor-guard crumpled. And righteous indignation beat on him in waves as he saw Big John had the same set look. To think these hoods could drive good men from the peaceful path they'd chosen! Savagely he closed his fingers on the roll of nickels.

Big John threw his Sunday shot, and Nick lost all interest in the fray. Seizing a bouncer in each hand, the big one's arms swung wide.

Intent on John, Sully didn't see the start of Deuce's downward blow. He ducked, not quite too late, and the blackjack, striking his shoulder, drove him to his knees

Surging to his feet, Sully made the startling realization that righteous indignation was only for the righteous; that he hadn't changed at all; that this was how he'd felt the last time he'd met the challenge of the arrogant—now he knew that was the way he'd always feel.

He heard a sound like the collision of two gourds, as Big John brought the bouncers heads together. Grinning, he drove his left hand to Deuce's body, and crashed a currency-laden fist on Deuce's nose.

Deuce staggered backward. Sully followed, but Tony beat him to the punch.

THE room was silent but for their heavy breathing; Sully's grin died quickly. John and Tony must never know his own reaction. It was early yet. He'd find some light diversion, get their minds off this unpleasantness. "Let's go," he said, moving toward the stairs.

At the landing they heard Benny groan, and turned to watch the fat man hoist himself erect. Benny's breath came painfully, but the glaze had left his eyes.

"You might remind him that if he's smart, we won't be coming back," Tony suggested.

But Sully knew that such reminders were unnecessary. For men like Nick, and Deuce, and Benny catch on fast, though they sometimes learn the hard way.

"Benny," he called pleasantly, "we'll be opening 700 Portola Road next week. The opening'll be a bit ritzy for your taste, but we'll be glad to have you drop in some other time, won't we, boys?"

"Sure," Tony agreed "Drop in any time, Benny; we'll give you anything we got."

"Yah," Big John said, "and bring your friends. We'll give it to them too."

Footsteps pounded on the walk behind them, and they turned to find the cabby at their heels, a tire-iron in his hand.

"Where you going, Clarence?" Big John challenged.

"With you," the cabby said. He turned to Sully. "You said I was hired permanent, didn't you, bud?"

"Let's go," the little man sang out, all weariness behind him, the bright new world ahead.

BOWLER

NOT SINCE "DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE" HAVE WE HAD SO STRANGE A DRAMA OF A MAN WITH TWO DIFFERING PERSONALITIES AS IN THIS STORY—

by Ewing Walker

THE place interested Bowler because he had never seen anything like it. That was true of a good many things he discovered each day, for though he appeared to be thirty or thereabout, he had, to all intents, lived but a matter of two years.

A rusty derby in one hand and a small satchel in the other, he paused before the old brick-and-plaster gateposts, on each of which, in faded letters, was the name PAYNEWOOD. A narrow path, bordered by long-neglected camellias, led to the somber dwelling. Passing through the gateway, he came to what had once been a fountain. Now it was dry, its base lichen-stained, its bowl filled with rotting leaves.

The house was a three-storied structure obviously old. The high columns were flaked and weather-splotched, the brick walls dark with age. Bowler wondered if it was occupied. Certainly there was no sign of life—at least none of the signs he had become familiar with during months of aimless, carefree rambling. No dog barked; no chickens moved about scratching for a bedtime snack.

Well, there was one way to find out, he told himself, and tapped the wide front door with its tarnished silver knocker.

Presently the door opened, and a plump Negro woman faced him.

"Good evening," offered Bowler.

"Evenin', suh."

"I'm sorry to bother you, but may I have a glass of water?"

"Yas, suh! I'll go fetch—"

Another voice asked: "Who is it, Dorsey?" The door opened wider. A young woman confronted him.

"You wish to see Dr. Payne?"

Bowler smiled. "No, I only want a drink of water."

She hesitated a moment. Then—"Won't you come in?" Leading the way into a large, dimly lighted living-room, she turned to the Negro maid. "Some water, Dorsey."

Bowler glanced about. "This must be a very old house."

"Yes, it was built in 1809 by my great-grandfather."

"It certainly is big for a farmhouse—bigger than any I've ever seen."

She smiled. "It's not exactly a farmhouse. You see, we have a rather large plantation."

"Oh, I understand. You—"

Dorsey returned with silver tray, pitcher and glasses.

Bowler drank eagerly. "My, but that's good! May I—"

From the hallway, a man's voice interrupted "We have company, Mary?"

"Yes, Father."

Bowler turned. Just beyond the doorway, a man sat in a wheel-chair. Even in the dim light, the figure was arresting—the great torso stiffly erect; the uncommonly large head with its mass of white hair; powerful hands gripping the wheels of his chair and shrunken legs hanging limply.

He propelled his chair into the room and halted a few feet from Bowler. "Won't you sit down?"

"Thank you."

"I'm Dr. Payne. Your name?"

"Bowler."

"Bowler? Don't think I recall. . . . May I ask if you are from this part of the country?"

"Oh, no. I'm from New York—I think."

A PAUSE followed that. Then: "You *think* you're from New York? You mean you don't *know* where you're from?"

"Frankly, I don't.'

Dr. Payne frowned. "I don't follow you, sir; and I might add I don't fancy flippancy."

"I assure you I am not being flippant. I admit it sounds foolish, not knowing for sure whether I'm from New York or not; but that's the way it is. I don't mind explaining, if you're interested."

"I'm very much interested. When a man tells me he doesn't know where he's from—"

Bowler settled back in his chair. "Well, I haven't the slightest idea how I got up there—or when I went up there. It was night and raining. All of a sudden, I saw, to my horror, that I was standing—not leaning over, mind you—but *standing* on the narrow ledge of the roof of a high building. A little later on, I found out it was twenty stories high. Far down below, I saw the street lights, and cabs moving along through the rain.

"I was terrified. For a frightful moment, I teetered there; then I leaped back and fell to my hands and knees. I clutched at the gravel of the roof. I guess I was trying to get hold of something solid, something fixed.

"I can't be sure, but I think I must have crouched there at least a quarter of an hour, with my face in my arms and with the rain soaking through my clothes and pattering on my neck. I was actually afraid to look up.

"Finally, I mustered up courage enough to peer around. I saw the entrance to a stairway, and I crawled toward it. I was afraid even to glance back. I walked the entire way down the twenty floors. There was an elevator somewhere, of course, but I never thought of it—and I wouldn't have used it if I had. It would have been too much like—like falling through space. At last, I was standing on the sidewalk in the rain."

"And then?" Dr. Payne prompted.

"Well, I walked about for a long time. I looked at street signs and buildings and store windows, trying to find some familiar sight. Everything was strange to me. I didn't see a person or building or a street that I'd ever seen before—or, at least, that I remembered having seen before.

"I LOOKED up at a clock in front of a drug-store. It was twenty minutes past eleven. Seeing what time it was, I realized I didn't know what day of the week or what day of the month or what month it was. Why, I didn't even know what *year* it was! Somehow, the thought frightened me. I felt so *alone*, so shut away from everyone. All those men and women passing me had friends, homes. I not only had no place to go, but I realized I didn't know a single human being in all the world!

"I came to a stationery-store. There was a calendar in the window—one of the kind you change daily—and I saw it was June 12, 1894. I felt a little relieved, but I don't know why. If the calendar had read 1794 or 1994 it would have been the same. Dates meant absolutely nothing to me.

"After a while, I realized I was tired, just about all in. I stopped under a street light and felt in my pockets. I found some bills and a few coins. I walked into a saloon and ordered a drink. I'll never need one more than I did then.

"There was a seaman standing next to me. He was pretty well along in his cups. He looked at my derby hat and said: 'Hi, Bowler! Have a drink on me.' That's how I got my name.

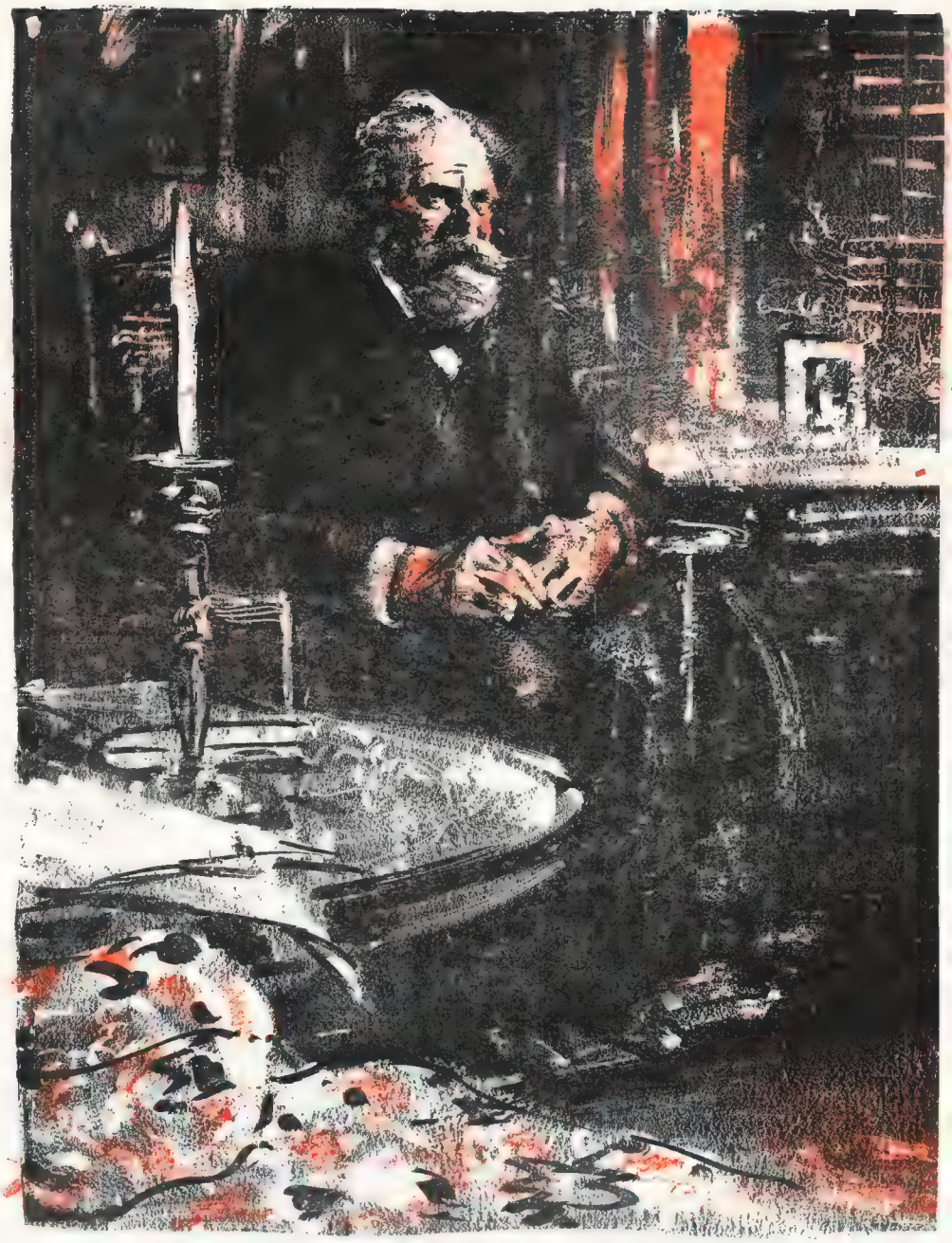
"There was a cheap hotel over the saloon. I spent the night there. As soon as I was in my room, I took off all my clothes and examined them. There was nothing that would serve as identification—not even an old envelope or card or scrap of paper. Even the labels had been cut away from my clothes. I knew then, of course, that my old self or my other self or whatever you want to call him, had removed every means of identification; and I realized, with a shudder, that a body that had fallen twenty stories could hardly be identified." Smiling a bit wryly, he added: "And that's how Bowler was born. Guess I have some sort of distinction by being born full grown."

"Complete amnesia," Dr. Payne muttered. "You went to the police, of course—had them check their missing-persons lists?"

"No sir! Not I! Think I'd try to recover a life that had evidently been so ghastly that it drove me— No, Dr. Payne. And I'm glad I didn't try to recover it. You know,"—he cocked

"But, Father, Bowler doesn't want to be changed back into the man he was."

"Complete amnesia," Dr. Payne muttered. . . . "And this happened two years ago?"



his head thoughtfully—"you know, I doubt if there's a man anywhere any happier than I am. I haven't any regrets over the past, because I've had no past; I certainly have no cares at the present, no fears of the future.

"Besides that, I'm a mature man, yet I've only begun to live. Everything's so tremendously interesting! The first thing every morning, I wonder what new and interesting things I'll discover during the day. It's—it's really quite wonderful."

DR. PAYNE leaned forward in his wheel-chair. "And this happened to you two years ago?"

"It will be two years next Thursday. I don't know where I'll be, but I'll certainly celebrate that day—my birthday, so to speak. I'll stop at some little farmhouse and get the people who live there to fry a chicken for me. Maybe,"—he glanced toward Mary and smiled—"maybe I'll be able to manage a birthday cake—with two candles on it."

Glancing through a window, he saw it was twilight. He rose. "I'd better be going. Mustn't let night catch me before I've found a place to stay. For some reason that I don't understand, people don't like to take one in after dark."

"You have no idea where you'll spend the night?" Mary asked.

"Oh, some little farmhouse. Odd thing about that: the smaller the house and the poorer the people, the more welcome you are. I wonder why that is." He started toward the door. "I want to thank you both—"

"Why not spend the night here?" Dr. Payne invited. "We certainly have plenty of room, and will be glad to have you."

Bowler shrugged. "I'd better get along. Don't want to inconvenience you."

"No trouble at all. Frankly, I'd like to talk with you further. As a matter of fact, Mr. Bowler, I have a proposition to make you."

"A proposition?"

"Yes. I have a rather large plantation here, and of course, a considerable number of tenants. Naturally,"—he glanced down wryly at his withered legs—"naturally, I can't get around. My superintendent left six weeks ago. I'd like for you to take the place."

"But, Doctor, you don't know anything about me. As a matter of fact, I don't know anything about myself."

"On the contrary, I believe I know a great deal about you. I'll pay you well, and you can leave at any time. Is it a deal?"

Bowler weighed that. Then—"It's a deal."

Mary rose. "I'll have Dorsey prepare a room for you. Tomorrow you can move into the superintendent's cottage."

After Bowler had retired, Mary asked her father: "You persuaded him to stay so that you could study him?"

"Yes. The most interesting case of the kind I've ever seen. You know, Mary, during these last few years, I've thought so much, theorized so much about what is commonly known as our subconscious mind. We really know very little about it, just as we know nothing whatever about our soul. Perhaps the two are in some way linked. Who knows?

"It may be true that each of us has a dual personality, as so many have believed—but which no one has proved. It may be that our subconscious mind serves the personality that normally lies hidden throughout life except for a few fleeting moments. Such moments, by the way, are usually early in the morning, during the brief period of transition from sleep to wakefulness.

"Let's look at it from this angle: we'll assume that we do have two personalities, and that our conscious mind serves one and our subconscious mind the other. The personality with its subconscious mind occasionally asserts itself for a brief moment. Isn't it conceivable that it could, because of some cataclysmic nervous shock, more strongly assert itself—even that it could take possession permanently?"

"You are thinking of this man Bowler?"

"I am," agreed Dr. Payne. . . .

Bowler quickly adapted himself to his new life and liked everything about it—riding about the plantation on his five-gaited saddle-mare; chatting and laughing with the Negro tenants; dining with Dr. Payne and Mary as they

talked of all manner of things. Occasionally Mary sat at the old grand piano and sang. He especially liked that.

One evening after the Doctor had retired, Bowler confronted Mary with his usual whimsical smile. "I need another name. Everybody has at least two. How about selecting another for me?"

"You mean you want *me—*"

"Of course. Why not? Everyone's been named by *some*body. No one ever named himself, so far as I know; and I certainly would rather be named by a very lovely person than by anybody else."

Mary's heart beat a little faster. "But for me to select a name for you—"

"It's easy enough. You won't even have to break a bottle of champagne over my head when you christen me. Just give me any name you like. Of course, I don't particularly fancy *Percy* or *Fauntleroy* or *Ethelbert—*"

"Do you like the name *John?*"

"If you do, it'll suit me fine. Make it *John?*"

She nodded, smiling. "Make it *John.*"

"*John* it is—*John Bowler.* Now I'm fully named." Abruptly he straightened and eyed her with mock sobriety. "Wait a minute! Wait—just—a—minute! We've got to select another name."

"*Another* name? For you?"

"Oh, no. I'm fixed up fine; but we need a name for that fellow I used to be. Can't keep on referring to 'him' or 'that guy' or 'that chap I used to be.' Wonder what his name was! Bet it was something like Marmaduke Flugg."

Mary laughed. "Ridiculous!"

"Not at all! That's a right nice name—at least on the mother's side. Maybe Marmaduke's mother married beneath her. Yep, from now on we'll call him Marmaduke."

THOUGH Bowler had been at Paynewood a matter of three months, he still wondered at the absence of visitors to the large and somber plantation house. The Negro tenants were the only ones who came.

One evening, while waiting for Dorsey to announce supper, Mary explained. "It's been a long while since we lived like other people—friends dropping in, relatives coming for visits, little parties—" She glanced toward the hallway, as though to make sure no one was there to overhear. "Years ago, my father was a very active man. He had his degree in medicine, but practiced very little. Just didn't care to bother with it.

"He and my mother were very happy. Then, she died—died when I was

"Wish I could live long enough to see—"

eight. I'm twenty-two now. It was a terrible shock to him. For a year or two, he worked like mad on the plantation—supervising the clearing of new ground, building more tenant-houses—*anything* to keep occupied. Then it happened: infantile paralysis.

"He's been hopelessly crippled ever since—he's paralyzed below the waist. That, coupled with my mother's death, changed him completely. He simply locked the world out. He buried himself here—wouldn't go anywhere, wouldn't receive anyone, not even relatives. He felt ashamed. The only reason he let you stay—" She halted abruptly. "Forgive me. I'm sorry."

He touched her hand with his fingertips. "He let me stay because I was an interesting case?"

She nodded.

"But what about you? Didn't he think life owed you something—"

"Yes, he insisted on sending me away to school, but I refused. He was lonely—and I was all he had. Finally, we compromised, and I had a governess. But he wouldn't see even her. Rather, he wouldn't let her see him. He built a cottage for her—it's the one you're using. She slept there and had her meals there. I said 'she.' I should have said *they*, because I must have had a dozen. None of them could stand it long.

"After a while my father became interested in medical research. He installed a laboratory, and has spent most of his time in it ever since. For the last two years, he has had to slow down, because of a serious heart condition. . . . But let's stop talking of Father and me," she broke off. "Tell me more about yourself. Surely you must wonder who you were and what you were before—before that night. Don't you ever feel you want to return to your old self?"

Bowler's whimsical smile returned. "You mean revert to Marmaduke? No, my dear. Definitely not! As far as I'm concerned, Marmaduke can go his way and I'll go mine." He rose and looked down at her soberly. "Asking me if I want to go back is like asking a healthy man if he doesn't want to die because he might go to a heaven that is better than this very satisfactory earth. He might, at that; but on the other hand, he might end up at that other place! It's too big a gamble to take voluntarily.

"Why should *I* take such a chance? I'm happy; I haven't any worries or any regrets." He placed his hands over hers. "Would *you* advise me to go back, if I could, and take on the worries and cares of—Marmaduke?"

"But being buried out here!" she evaded. "Surely you have some ambition to go out into the world and *do* things, make a name for yourself!"

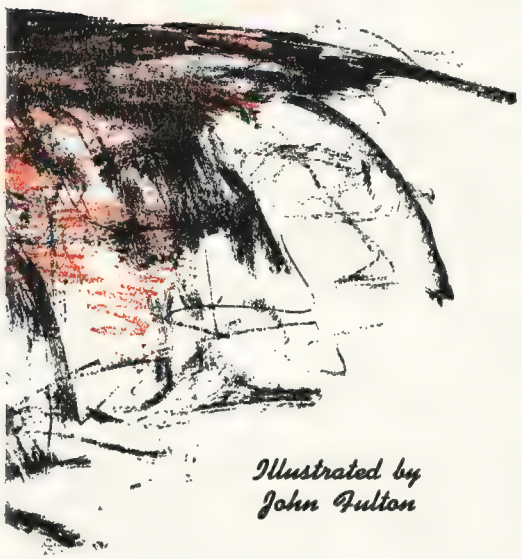
Smiling, he moved his head slowly from side to side. "'Buried out here,' you say. What *is* being buried out here? Does it mean being shut away from people you really don't want to see? I can't imagine a happier fate. Out of forty people you meet, how many are really interesting, how many do you really enjoy? Not over two; probably only one; usually none.

"And you ask if I've any ambition! Bless your soul, I'm just about the most ambitious man in all the wide, wide world! Absolutely! And you know what this great ambition of mine is? I'll tell you: It's to have *no* ambition, in the usual interpretation of the word. No man could have a loftier aim.

"Why would I want to excel another man? It would just make the

other fellow feel cheap! That would hurt me worse than it did him. As you might say, I've only lived about two years; but in that time, I've learned that it hurts mighty bad to hurt someone else. It isn't a nice feeling, Mary."

He crossed the room and peered through a window toward the moss-stained fountain. "No, my dear, I don't want to go back. I don't want *ever* to go back I haven't any fear of the future, but frankly, I've got a mighty real fear of the past. Besides, if I went back, *you* wouldn't be there."



Illustrated by John Fulton

His seriousness fell away, disappeared. "Maybe I'm kind of proud of John Bowler, because I'm just plain me! Besides, I reckon maybe I'm the first man since Adam with neither mother nor father. Why, bless your soul, I'm quite *somebody,* Mary. Don't *you* think so?"

She didn't admit it, but she did think so.

IT was just before supper—dinner was the midday meal in Paynewood. The Doctor, as usual, was in his laboratory. Bowler and Mary waited in the living-room for Dorsey to announce the evening meal. Mary, at the moment, was arranging flowers on the piano.

Bowler approached her. "I'm confused, Mary."

"Confused, John?"

"Yes; and it's strange. I've never known the feeling before." He looked at her drolly. "Maybe our friend Marmaduke Flugg knew what it was, but I don't."

"I don't understand, John."

"Of course you don't. I'll try to explain. I noticed it first several weeks ago, and it's grown steadily. It's about you," he ended significantly.

"About *me?*"

He nodded. "Uh-huh, about you. All of a sudden, I realized you were in my mind constantly—while I was riding about the plantation, or lying awake at night—just about all the time. But that's the *least* of it. For some crazy reason, I keep wondering if your hair really *is* as soft as it looks." He ran his fingers through her hair. "It *is!* It actually is," he stated soberly. "Why, it's even softer! And then, most of all, I want to put my arms around you and hold you very close and never let you go, Mary—*never* let you go! Just what is this emotion or feeling? Is it what they call 'love'?"

Her heart was racing, but she nodded slowly. "Yes, John, it's 'what they call love.'"

"Then you know how I feel? How could you?"

"Yes, dear, I know how you feel. I know because I—I feel that way toward you."

BOWLER was in Natchez on plantation business, and Mary and Dr. Payne were in the latter's laboratory.

"I believe it can be done," he said.

"You mean—"

"Yes, I believe we can transform this man Bowler into the man or personality he was before."

She was outwardly calm, but inwardly a little panicky. "By an operation?"

"No, indeed! I've examined Bowler physically several times. No physical injury played a part in his transition from one personality to another. I'm confident—almost positive—we could change him back into the man he was by the use of drugs. We can put men to sleep; we can stimulate them to a state of frenzy; we can give them pleasant dreams—or sordid dreams; we can bring back life to a person to all intents dead; we can almost instantly kill a healthy person; and so on and on and on.

"Assuming each of us has two distinct personalities,—and I'm very sure of it now,—I believe we can place either of those personalities in the ascendant almost at will. I think I'll have the answer soon—if this heart of mine holds out."

"Please!"

"Sorry. I'll not refer to it again."

"But, Father, Bowler doesn't want to be changed back into the man he was," Mary protested.

"I don't blame him for that; but we'll not stop there. I've prepared one drug that I'm almost positive will turn him into the man he was; but remembering what he went through, I'll never administer that particular drug to him until I know I have another that will just as readily transform that other man back into the man we know as Bowler."

"It seems incredible."

He shrugged. "Every generation has seen the discovery of 'incredible' things. In science, nothing is incredible. It is merely unknown—temporarily. As for our friend Bowler—I'll explain all of it to you in a day or two."

Mary was seated at the piano, Bowler at her side, a couple of days later.

Dorsey hurried into the room.

"Miss Mary—yo' pa!"

"What is it, Dorsey?"

"I jes' went to take 'im his coffee, an' I found 'im all slumped over. He's powerful sick, Miss Mary."

Mary and Bowler, followed by Dorsey, hurried into the laboratory. They found Dr. Payne slumped over in his rolling-chair and breathing laboriously. They got him to his room and into bed.

Finally, he opened his eyes. "This is it, Mary," he whispered.

"Oh, no, Father!"

He nodded weakly. "Yes, this is—it." Slowly he turned his head toward Bowler and then toward Dorsey. "Go—away," he ordered feebly. "Go!"

They left the room.

"The—the special bottles," he whispered to Mary. "Two small—bottles—in laboratory. One round—white; the other flat—brown. Get them."

Mary hurried into the laboratory, found two small vials and returned with them.

Feebly, Dr. Payne pointed toward the round one containing a white liquid. "That—that'll change Bowler—into his former—self." With an effort, he moved his arm slightly and pointed toward the other containing a brownish fluid. "That—that'll bring Bowler back. Give each before—a meal. Will sleep twelve—fourteen hours. Wish I could live—long enough—to see—"

He fell back. He was not to live long enough to see.

DR. PAYNE had been dead a matter of three weeks. Bowler and Mary continued dining together. Each night he retired to his cottage and she to her bedroom in the large house. Dorsey and her husband occupied a cabin near by.

The situation disturbed Bowler. Confronting Mary, he demanded: "Aren't you lonely here?"

She nodded. "Frankly, I am."

"I don't think it's safe, Mary."

She shrugged. "What can we do?"

"I think I should move over here. I could use Dr. Payne's room."

"No, it wouldn't do, John. People would talk."

He didn't quite get that. "Talk? What would they talk about?"

It wasn't easy to explain to him. She took his hands and looked up at him, smiling. "They would talk about you and me, John. They would say—well, unkind things about you and me—an unmarried couple, living in this house."

"I still don't know what they'd say. I'd be here at night only to see that

nothing happened to you. Anybody ought to be able to understand that." He broke off; then, with his whimsical smile: "Guess I'm just plain ignorant. Probably Marmaduke would know all about it."

She cupped his chin in her hand. "I love you even more, if possible, for not understanding; but it can't be otherwise. After all, we have to conform to certain established customs and standards."

"We do? Why?"

She had no answer to that one.

"All right, if people would 'talk,' as you say, if we slept in this house while we're not married, why don't we get married? All I'm thinking about is your safety."

"Is that *all?*" she asked.

He weighed that a long moment. "No-o, now that you mention it, it isn't all. I want to be as close to you as I can as much of the time as I can. Anything wrong about that?"

"No, dear, there's nothing wrong about that."

"Then, why put it off?"

"We'll not put it off long, John."

"Good night." He started away, halted, turned. "Something just occurred to me."

"What is it, dear?"

"I have a sudden desire to kiss you good night."

"Then do."

AS the days passed, Mary realized they could not continue to live in this fashion. Should they marry? She had never wanted anything so much. This droll, whimsical, ingenuous Bowler who entered her life late one afternoon by the simple process of seeking a drink of water—just about everything now revolved about him. She could not visualize a future without him. But before marrying him, she must know who and what he was before. Perhaps there existed a situation that, by all standards of right and wrong, demanded that he return to his old life. Perhaps there was another with a prior claim, a greater claim. Yes, she must know first.

Her father had been sure the drugs he had prepared would metamorphose Bowler into his old self, and in turn, bring him back again. Would they do all her father had believed? Perhaps he had been wrong. Suppose she could turn Bowler back into his former personality and state of life; and suppose that life was still bitter enough to drive him to self-destruction? Could she bring him back again before—

She tried to forget self, but could not. She wanted Bowler, needed him.

But she must go through with it. She must take the chance. Any other course would be unfair to him. She would act at once. The longer she put it off, the harder it would be. She remembered he drank a glass of milk each evening before supper. That simplified matters. . .

Bowler entered the living-room a short while before Dorsey would announce supper.

"Have a hard day?" Mary asked with forced casualness.

"Oh, no." He smiled down at her. "I never have hard days. I like 'em all."

"You have a *very* happy nature, John."

"Well, I *am* happy, if that's what you mean. Love me?"

"Very much."

He grinned. "Wonder if you'd have loved Marmaduke Flugg?"

"Please!" She rose. "I'll get your milk." She hurried from the room.

Should she do this thing? She hurried on, her thoughts and heart racing. Suppose— Once in the laboratory, she took up a small round vial, concealed it in her handkerchief, so that a curious Dorsey might not see, and passed on into the butler's pantry. She poured milk into a glass, removed the cork from the small bottle and paused, staring unseeingly before her. Suppose. . . . *Should* she go through with it? Suppose—

With an effort, she steadied her hand, poured the contents of the vial into the milk, and hurrying into the living-room, held the glass toward Bowler. "Your milk, John."

He took the glass and held it aloft. "Your health, sweet lady!" He emptied the glass. "That *was* good. What wonderful chemists cows are!" He smiled a little sheepishly. "I've said that same thing at least a dozen times. I must be a tedious companion."

"Tedious? Oh, you're anything but that, dear."

"Thanks. Know what? I've a strong suspicion Marmaduke Flugg was a tedious bore."

"You don't think much of Marmaduke, do you?"

"No, I guess not; but I'm sort of sorry for him, because he did die young and—he never knew you." He reached out as though to take her hand, but instead he asked: "Want to do me a favor, sweet lady?"

"I'll always want to do that, my dear."

"Then sing to me—sing 'Flow Gently, Sweet Afton.' Rare Bobby Burns! *He* died young, too—just like Marmaduke. Guess that's about the only thing they had in common."

She sat before the piano and ran her fingers over the keys.

"Don't see how you do it," he said.

"Do what, John?"

"Play a piano—work your fingers that way. Just don't see how you do it. Doubt if I could learn how to play even 'Chopsticks'." He sank into a large easy chair, and leaned back contented, even a little wearily.

She turned back to the piano and sang. At the end, she glanced toward Bowler. He was nodding. She hurried to him. "John!"

He looked up and studied her, his eyes half closed.

"Yes? Yes, my dear Lady Mary Payne?" he asked drowsily.

Her heart was pounding. "Shall we go in to supper?"

"Don't b'lieve I want any," he said slowly. "No, don't b'lieve I do." He shook his head, as though to clear it. "What time is it?"

She glanced at her watch. "Quarter past six."

"Quarter past *six?*" he asked with weary incredulity. "Are you *sure?*"

She nodded.

HE slumped back, managing a smile. "Guess I had a pretty hard day after all, 'cause I'm sleepy as all get-out." With an effort, he rose. "Mary,"—he groped for her hand—"Mary, I've just got to lie down—just plain *got* to." He started toward the door. At the threshold he halted, returned to her and kissed her.

"'Night, Mary."

"Good night, John."

Again he started toward the door, and again he halted and turned. "Funny, isn't it?"

"What's funny, dear?" she asked softly.

"Yep, it's just—plain—funny! I love you—oh, I love you so *very* much, Miss Mary. *Miss Mary!* That's what Dorsey calls you, isn't it?" Soberly, he pondered that. "Reckon maybe *I'll* call you Miss Mary from now on. It's sort of respectful-like." He knitted his brows thoughtfully. Then: "What was I talkin' about, anyway?"

"You started to tell me about something that's funny.

"Oh, sure! Sure, sure, sure! Yep, funny thing. Know what it is? You *don't?*" He leaned toward her confidentially. "Then I'll—just—tell—you, Miss Mary. The nicest thing—the *very* nicest—thing—that comes to me—every day is—kissing you—good night. Yes, sir. . . . 'Scuse me, Miss Mary. Yes, *ma'am,* I think about it—all day—long. Just keep sayin'—to myself, 'I'm going—to kiss Mary—good night—tonight.' Oh, I say it over and over and over again." He broke off, observing her contritely. "Sa-a-y, that's bad!"

"What's bad, John?"

"I almost forgot—to kiss you—good night. That's bad! Oh, that's—that's *awful* bad—Miss Mary. Letting just—plain old—sleep—interfere with—the nicest—sweetest—" Appealingly, he leaned toward her. "Let's figure it out—tomorrow. I'm kind of—sleepy. What you say?"

"Let's do," she whispered.

He turned away. "'Night, Miss Mary Payne."

"'Night, Mr. John Bowler."

He walked through the doorway. Through a window she watched him grope his way across the lawn toward his cottage.

Mary slept little that night. Was he all right? Suppose— Should she go to his cottage and make sure he was all right? Had she done the right thing? Suppose— Sleeping fitfully, the interminable questions recurred. Suppose, suppose, suppose—

BETWEEN five and six next morning Mary waited in the living-room. Tensely she peered through a window facing Bowler's cottage. She heard a step behind her and turned. An amazed Dorsey, feather-duster in hand, stared at her. "Miss *Mary!* What you doin' up dis time o' day? *You* know better'n dat! Why, hit's jes' twixt daybreak an' sunup!" She placed a brown, sympathetic hand on Mary's arm. "What's troublin' you, honey?"

"Nothing, Dorsey. I just couldn't sleep."

"Would some coffee an' biscuits he'p? I kin fix 'em in no time."

"No, thank you. Now run along and finish your housework. Let the living-room go until later."

"Yas'm." Dorsey, mumbling, reluctantly left the room.

Mary continued peering through the window that faced Bowler's cottage. Then she saw him. Or *was* it Bowler? Her heart racing, she watched him as he left his cottage and stared about him bewilderedly. She watched him as he walked slowly toward the big house, now and again halting to stare about wonderingly. Once he looked down at his clothes, fingering his coat speculatively. Always before, the carefree Bowler had walked with a long stride, his arms swinging, his head high. This particular morning, there was a hint of stiffness in his bearing; he walked measuredly.

Mary hurried into the kitchen. Dorsey eyed her. "Feel bettah?"

"I'm all right."

"No ma'am, you aint. You can't fool me. I knows you too good. Now den, you jes' tell me—"

They heard the front-door knocker falling.

"Who you reckon dat is?" Dorsey asked.

Mary managed a blank expression. "Better go see."

Wiping her hands on her apron, Dorsey left. Soon she was back. "Hit's jes' him," she stated.

"Just who?"

"Jes' Mr. Bowler; but he sho' do act curisome." She broke into a broad grin. "He's allus projeckin', though. *You* know how he is. 'Tended he didn't know whar he was at! *You* know how he makes on."

"What did you do?" Mary demanded a little breathlessly.

"Do? I jes' said, 'Set down.'" She turned to her biscuits. "Bettah go on in dere an' take 'im down a peg or two, an' keep 'im pacified till breakfas' is ready."

Mary rose. "Wait here until I call you, Dorsey." She walked slowly toward the living-room. Nearing it, she halted. Someone was playing the piano. She stood in the hallway, listening. It was something from Verdi. She was too agitated to remember just what it was, but she realized it was skillfully and beautifully done.

The music stopped. She went to the doorway of the living-room.

"You play beautifully," she managed to say.

The man at the piano rose, frowning. "'*Beautifully?*' I've been playing atrociously." He flexed the fingers of both hands. "I—why, I don't know what's come over me! My fingers are like sticks! And only yesterday they were all right—or nearly all right; but today—I'm all thumbs! I—I don't understand it." Pausing, he glanced about the room. "Something very strange has happened to me."

"Strange?"

"Yes. I don't know what to make of it. Yesterday, I was in New York. I had—certain plans. Now, I seem to be out in the country somewhere. I haven't any recollection of coming here. . . . Where *am* I?" he demanded harshly. "I'm completely bewildered. I haven't the slightest idea who you are or where I am. I don't understand. Please help me if you can." He studied her intently. "I don't know where to begin, or what to say. I've never seen this house before. I—"

"Please sit down," Mary invited. "Perhaps I can help you. You are on a plantation near Natchez, Mississippi."

"*Natchez? Mississippi?* That isn't possible! Yesterday—late last night, in fact—I was in New York. I certainly couldn't have been in New York last night and in Mississippi this morning."

"You were not in New York last night," Mary explained.

"But I was! I know! I went up to the roof of the Chemical Building and— Please! Where am I?"

"I know it's difficult for you to understand, and I know it's a shock to you, but you must believe me. You really are in Mississippi. I am Mary Payne. You are on our plantation."

He moistened his lips. "When—when did I come here?"

She hesitated, but he had to be told. "It will soon be eight months."

He sat staring at her incredulously. "*Eight months?* You are serious?"

"It's true. You came here nearly eight months ago. My father—he's dead now—was a physician. He persuaded you to stay, because he was interested in your case. You were suffering from complete amnesia. You told us your name was Bowler."

"Bowler? *Bowler?* Never heard of the name. My name is Wyatt Drew. Why did I stay here?"

"Because you liked it here. Besides, you had no place to go."

He crossed the room and peered through a window. "It's very bewildering." He turned facing her. "It's evident you've been good to me, and I'm grateful. If I've been here eight months, I owe you an explanation." He paused, smiling, but it was not Bowler's whimsical smile. "It isn't easy to—to explain."

"Then don't."

"I think I should, because of all you've done for me. As I told you, my name is Wyatt Drew. I am a concert pianist. It's possible you have heard of me."

She nodded.

"I suppose I should have been satisfied with being a pianist, but I wasn't. I wanted to make a lot of money. I put everything I had in a music-publishing company. It went on the rocks—left me broke, and hopelessly in debt. About the same time, my wife and I— Well, she preferred someone else. Can't say I blame her.

"My playing suffered; and the critics—you can imagine what they did to me. My audiences, of course, fell off. Finally, I had no bookings. I was washed up. I couldn't see any particular reason for carrying on—and still can't, as a matter of fact; so—well, that's why I went up to the roof of the Chemical Building. Maybe I was permitting myself some melodramatics. I must have been, for it seems I didn't carry through after all. Didn't quite have what it takes, I suppose. *Eight months!* And I thought it was yesterday."

"It hasn't been eight months since—since that night," she explained. "It has been nearly two years and eight months."

He stared at her. "But I thought you said—"

"You have been *here* eight months, but you had been away from New York nearly two years when you came here."

He slumped into a chair. "It's hard to believe. Over two years!"

MARY studied him a moment. Then: "You want to go back?"

He weighed that. "Yes, I think I do; but only for one reason: I quit before. I'd like to see if I have more courage now than I had then."

"You mean—you mean you'll try again to—"

"No, I sha'n't do that. I just want to see if I really have the courage to carry on when things are going wrong."

"You expect to be happy if you take up your old life?"

"Happy? I certainly do not." He glanced away. "I shall be anything but happy. . . How far is it to Natchez?" he broke off.

"Seven miles."

"Do you know when there's a train for New York? I seem to have enough money for the trip."

"There's a train passing through about eleven tomorrow morning," she explained. "I could drive you in."

"Thank you. I wish I could somehow repay you for all you've done for me."

"You've more than repaid us. Meanwhile, it's time for a rather late breakfast. Would you like a drink?"

"I could do with a toddy, after what I've learned."

"Just a moment." She moved leisurely enough out into the hallway, but once there, hurried on to the laboratory. *Should* she do this thing? He said he wished to go back. But why? Certainly the one reason he advanced seemed a rather flimsy one. And Bowler—dear, whimsical Bowler! He was far happier at Paynewood than Wyatt Drew could be in New York—or wherever he chose to live. After all, Bowler was hers. They wanted each other, needed each other. Yes, she would go through with it. She had a right, perhaps even a duty, to go through with it. . . . God grant that her father had been right, and that she could indeed bring Bowler back!

SHE mixed a toddy and added the contents of a small flat bottle. She returned to the living-room and, outwardly calm, handed the drink to Wyatt Drew.

"My gratitude!" he offered, and emptied the glass.

"Won't you play something else for me?" she invited.

"I'll try." He played a light, lilting thing she did not know. At the end, he rose. "I wonder if you would excuse me?"

"Of course."

"Would I have time for a little nap before breakfast?"

She nodded. "Yes."

"Thank you." Leaving her, he crossed the yard to Bowler's cottage.

Mary seated herself before the piano, with her hands in her lap. Outwardly, she was calm. Inwardly— *Would* Bowler return? Suppose–

Dorsey bustled into the room. "You ready fo' breakfas', Miss Mary—if you kin call it breakfas', late as 'tis?"

Mary started toward the dining-room.

"You aint waitin' fo' Mr. Bowler?"

"No, Dorsey. Mr. Bowler is taking a little nap."

"A nap? You say a *nap? Ag'in?* Dat's de sleepin'est man, all of a sudden, ever *I* see! He jes' got through sleepin' mighty nigh 'roun' de clock, an' heah he at it ag'in! Umph!"

The rest of the morning and the afternoon passed slowly for Mary. Twice she tried to nap. Sleep eluded her. Several times she walked out

"Don't see how you play a piano that way," he said. "Doubt if I could play even 'Chopsticks'."

into the yard, ostensibly to gather flowers. Actually it was to keep an eye on Bowler's cottage. *Would* he come back? Or would Wyatt Drew return? Possibly her father had erred. Perhaps dear, carefree Bowler had been thrust into that limbo from which there was no returning.

Twilight came. Dorsey approached her solicitously. "Miss Mary, aint dat man up yit? Hit's gittin' roun' time fer supper."

Mary managed a smile. "Thank you, Dorsey, but don't bother about supper. You run along home. I'll be all right."

Puckering her lips, Dorsey left.

"I must have some sleep," Mary told herself. "Not much—just a little will do." She nodded, and quickly straightened with a jerk. Sleep could wait. Where was Bowler? Was *he* asleep? Or was he gone—gone for all time? "I *must* have some sleep," she again told herself. She undressed and got into bed.

"Now, I *am* going to sleep," she said determinedly; but she did not fall asleep. "I wonder if—" She rose, crossed the room and peered through a window facing John Bowler's cottage. Suppose—

ELEVEN o'clock came—midnight. She dozed momentarily, only to awaken with a start. "I was asleep," she told herself, almost reproachfully. "I should not have gone to sleep; I should have waited." *Would* he come back? She heard the clock down in the living-room strike one, two . . .

Suddenly she heard the knocker on the front door falling loudly, peremptorily; and she heard a voice—Bowler's voice—calling frantically: "Mary! *Mary!*"

She hurried to a window of her bedroom. "John! Is it you?"

"Yes, of course!" he shouted. "Hurry—open the door. Something strange has happened. Hurry, Mary!"

"Just a moment. Wait till I get some clothes on."

"Clothes? Damn the clothes! This is more important than clothes! Hurry, Mary."

"Right away," she promised.

She got into a dressing-gown and hurried down the stairs and flung open the door.

Bowler, his eyes wide, took her in his arms. "Oh, Mary! Something strange has happened. I woke up, and I saw I had my clothes on and that my suitcase was packed, as though I were going away. What does it *mean*, Mary? *I'm* not going away! I'm not *ever* going away without you! What is it, Mary? Did I have a bad dream?" He shook her gently. "*Was* it only a bad dream?"

"Yes, dear, it *was* only a bad dream—a bad dream that will never come back again, John."

What Do *You* Think?

A Readers' Forum

An Appreciation of Perfection

ALONG with numerous million others, my contact with the art treasures of the Old World resulted from the military necessity for sending Americans abroad with a gun in hand instead of a Baedeker. But after V-E Day, a surprising number of us sought out those objects we'd hoped to see some day as peaceful tourists.

Let me say now that I know nothing of art professionally, either as painter, musician, sculptor or anything else. I sought it out originally as a sort of chore, feeling that the folks back home might quiz me about it, and I'd feel slightly silly if I had to admit to seeing nothing but the wreck and ruin of war. So I hied me to the Louvre, the British Museum, the wood-carving shops of Oberammergau. I gaped at cathedrals—Chester, Wrexham, Notre Dame, Sacré-Coeur and dozens of smaller ones whose names I never learned. I sat for a portrait, and examined many, and bought a few of the oils and etchings of lesser known and inexpensive artists. I even learned the importance of the frame to a picture, and my home is now adorned with every picture, carving and ceramic that I could honestly buy and send through the Army Post Office. My interest in art may have started as a chore, but it ended in genuine affection, because of this brief capsule education.

Far more important, however, than either the tangible evidence procured or the knowledge that I had done the "right things" in Europe, was the basic truth I had learned about art. I'm convinced there's nothing mysterious about it; every last artist I met was a normal family man who dressed and looked exactly like every other member of his race or nation. Every conversation with an artist, every history of an art object indicated the same thing. Art is the striving toward perfection and perfection is achieved by hard, never-ending work—for the sake of work and a job well done.

I had the best opportunity to observe the wood-carvers of Oberammergau. Their manual labor didn't differ greatly from, say, a carpenter's. With a variety of chisels they cut interminably, and their best product was usually one that had been turned out many times over. They were swamped with orders, requests and threats—the Americans in and around Oberammergau were simply carving-wacky—but nothing could hasten the good artisan or make him slur his work. Each carving had to be just so, and a certain amount of time was needed. Nor did the demand affect prices.

Most significant of all, though, the carver was happy. Neither invasion nor defeat, lack of fuel and food nor the prospect of a hard winter made any difference. He had his work, and in his work he was happy.

I wonder if that isn't the solution for most of our own ills?

J. E. H.

Too Much about Money

I THINK a good deal about money. But not quite in the way so many people seem to be thinking of it nowadays. Every day I hear fellows back from the war talking of money.

"I don't care what I do, just so long as I make a pile of money," so many say. Their wives, sweethearts, and mothers seem to think this is a worthy goal.

Someone should tell them they can get the car they dreamed of back in that foxhole, and other luxuries, but not this week—not just handed to them for services rendered, even though their service was the most valuable ever given to this country by anyone.

These boys are thinking too much in terms of big money. Our sights should be on bungalows, little farms, jobs that pay enough to "lay by a little." I too have hopes of getting into my own airplane some day, but I don't want it if it makes me too money-conscious. I thought America was all through keeping up with the Joneses. Instead they seem only to have changed to keeping up with Mr. Millionaire.

Danny Boettsher.

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Reduced Circumstances

ONLY a few minutes before this thing started, Phil Sheridan had caught Evans, the first assistant engineer, in his room. There was a girl between those two,—the daughter of the chief mate,—so Lloyd Evans didn't rate snooping around among Sheridan's gear.

Evans didn't get excited about being found. His dark, good-looking face stayed blank; then he curved a queer grin at Phil Sheridan and sidestepped him to the door.

"I was just going," he said, and Sheridan didn't stop him. For a redhead, Phil Sheridan has his temper asbestos-sheathed. I know, because he's been trying to teach me navigation. Maybe the grip he's got on himself is why he's second mate of this Liberty wagon, though only twenty-two.

Sheridan just stood there by the door and closed one eye, looking pained, the way he does when he's thinking hard.

"That black Welshman's been up to no good," he said aloud. "He went ashore this afternoon and got his car out of the garage, and then he came back, and I find him in my room."

Sheridan glanced at the bulkhead, but Hazel Lake's photo was still there, smiling at him. As the whole ship knew, he'd proposed to her last time in port, and she'd turned him down: but that hadn't spoiled her for Phil Sheridan. Now he took a quick look in the drawer under his settee. He kept the half-ounce bottle of perfume in there. While Lloyd Evans had been whooping it up in Antwerp, Sheridan had bulled through to Paris, nearly being shot as a suspicious civilian a couple of times, to blow his wad on that perfume with a name that meant Breath of a Dream, for Hazel out of a shop on the Rue de la Paix. The idea, as well as I could make out, was to show her there was no hard feeling about being canned.

The bottle was there. Sheridan's forehead smoothed out. He sat down at his table, opened a book and said:

"While I'm ashore tonight, Huggins, I want you to have a shot at working this Latitude by Meridian problem on page —"

I had started across the room to look at this sticker, when something in my way stopped me dead. This obstacle came up to my waist. It was sort of the size and shape of an overgrown bathtub, only it was black, decked over half its length, and it had a woven black line running back and forth through ten fairleads. I had a cockeyed notion I'd seen something like it before somewhere.

"Say, Mr. Sheridan," I said, "what's this you've got here in the middle of your—"

I stopped. The thing was a shoe! A shoe big enough for a giant bigger than anybody had ever even lied about. A shoe! It wasn't right. I looked for Sheridan, quick. After all, he was an officer, and I was only an A.B. He got paid for handling things.

I saw him. He was sitting up on top of a platform about eighteen feet high, with his feet hanging over the edge. There was a mighty queer expression on his face. The whole works and I and Mr. Sheridan were in a joint about the size of Grand Central station. But it looked familiar, too.

Then I recognized the place. And I got it. We were still in Sheridan's room. But he and I had both suddenly been scaled down to about six inches high. That was all we were—six inches high.

WELL, I was astonished. Nothing like that had ever happened to me before. It didn't make sense. Sheridan was astonished, too. He just sat up there swinging his legs, and his face stayed worth looking at. Of course it was a queer spot for a guy to be in that was going to see his girl that night for the first time in three months. He didn't say a thing.

"I'll bet it's electronics," I said.

"What is?" His voice sounded empty.

"This. You an' me."

"What do you know about electronics?"

"Well, I can read ads, can't I?" I said.

He didn't answer. He just didn't seem interested.

We have always thought Mr. Watkins a sober and truthful gentleman; but sometimes—well, read this story, for example!

by RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

"It's like my grandfather says," I told him. "Something new comes along that's going to make over the world. But the kick-back of it is something they don't figure."

Sheridan still wasn't interested.

"Take the airplane, for instance, my grandfather says," I went on. "There's an invention that's going to let you drop down to Florida for a swim Saturday afternoons in January. Only the first thing you know, some guy is up in one trying to drop a bomb on your knob; and at that, you're still in Flatbush. This is some sour note out o' electronics, sir."

Pete Sheridan stood up on the chair, and though he's a six-incher now instead of a six-footer, with the top of the table way up above his head, he was so sunk he didn't look ridiculous.

"The things that happen to a second mate!" he said. "Go out on deck and see if everybody is—our size."

"Aye, sir," I said, and started. It was quite a walk across to the open door. I got one step out in the passage when I saw a high billowing whiteness, like a white squall in the tropics, bearing down on me from forward. And under it, big feet, pounding down on the deck. They were like a couple of medium tanks some winchman gone nuts was lifting up and down on cargo falls. I slammed myself on deck against the bulkhead, and a foot went thundering past. The wind of it blew on me, it was so close. When I got the nerve to lift up, the thing was gone aft and I saw it was nothing but that runt Rosario, the utility man, hustling sheets and towels out o' the officers' rooms for the laundry.

I crawled back into Sheridan's room. I was feeling lower than I was, which was low, and limp and lost. They use 'em man-size in the merchant marine.

Sheridan was leaning against the back of the chair with his arms folded, looking way up at Hazel Lake's photo. I opened my mouth at him a couple of times without getting anything out.

He nodded. "Never mind, Huggins," he said. "I just saw the boatswain go past the porthole."

"Huh?"

"Like King Kong."

He stood on the chair seat with his head on one side, his right eye closed. He looked as if he could stand a little cheering up.

"It's a good break everything we had on shrank with us," I said. "Otherwise—why, we might 'a' dropped right down inside our own pant-legs and smothered!"

He didn't even hear me, let alone cheer up.

"At least there was no pain," I said.

"That black Welshman!" he muttered, scowling up into a knot.

'Huh?"

"Ah, wurra! Hazel! Hazel! I've heard o' black folk among our people, with the power of the Eye and the spell, though never did I believe a whisper of it myself. But Lloyd Evans did this! Have ye not felt his eye? All the tales of the leprechauns and the little people and—"

He was going Celtic on me. I know. My grandfather was that way.

"Now look, Mr. Sheridan," I broke in, pretty severe, "let's be reasonable about this."

"Reasonable? *Ha!*"

"We're little people ourselves now, sure. But because some dumb cluck connected two wrong wires somewhere, you aint going to tell me you believe in magic?"

He took a turn across the seat of the chair.

"Evans might be back any time, and step on us for a couple of insects," I said. "And there'd be no magic about it, just gravity. What do we do next?"

He looked down at his feet. And then shook himself, sighed, not happily, and laughed, not happily either.

"You're right, Huggins," he said. "Steady's the word."

He swung himself over the edge of the chair, grabbed a leg, and slid down to the deck.

"Bear a hand, Huggins," he said. "We've got to get this drawer open a little wider."

He pointed up to the drawer under his settee.

"What for?"

"You forget, Huggins," he said softly. "That's where Miss Lake's perfume is. I'm taking it to her tonight."

I went cold inside, but I broke it to him gently.

"Mr. Sheridan, you got to remember you might not go over so big with Miss Lake now, except maybe as one o' those lapel ornaments."

"So what?" he said. "Didn't she have the good sense to decline me, and as gently as an angel, last run? This

is a free tribute, not a bribe, to a girl so beautiful and sweet—" He choked it off. He shook his finger at me.

"Miss Lake shall have her perfume," he said through his teeth, "while there's enough o' me left to cast a shadow."

"But sir, as soon as people see us—we'll start a riot—or a panic!"

"I told Hazel I'd bring her the finest perfume in Paris for being a cause of sorrowful tears to her. She rates it, regardless of my small trouble."

A romantic. That's what he was. A natural is another way of saying it. And I'm not thinking of an ace and a face card.

Sheridan smiled, and it knocked a nick right out of my chest.

"She'll not be seeing me," he said. "Never. But she'll know I've been thinking of her. Want to bear a hand, Huggins?"

"Sure. I'm not doing anything important."

"Make a back for me, then," he said, all business, sizing up the height of the drawer.

BUT it wasn't as easy as that. We had to horse that shoe across the floor. It was like dragging a lifeboat. By standing on it, we could climb up into the drawer.

I was glad Sheridan had been able to buy only half an ounce, when I saw the size of it. The perfume was in a trick bottle, all curves, in a cardboard box that came up to my belt. With my sheathknife I sawed off a length of black thread out of his sewing kit, and we lowered away the box to the floor.

"Bring a coil of that line along, Huggins," he said. "We may need it."

"Aye, sir!" I said, and cut a good length.

I was humoring him, understand. I didn't figure we'd get the box much farther than the door. And I didn't have any hot plans of my own.

I'd always intended sometime when I was a little ahead of the game to rent a room somewhere and go in there and sit down and think. Just think. There's plenty in the world I wanted to unscramble. Being a six-incher instead of a six-footer didn't help any, and I was pretty confused. Sheridan was as cool as an oyster now, in a grim kind of way, and I tailed along to give my brain a rest.

Once we got that perfume to the deck, we used a bit of thread for a lashing and made a double handle so we could lift from both sides. It weighed a ton, but together we could just about manhandle it along.

Sheridan was working away as if it was no trick at all to get that perfume to his girl's house. This ship was at the ballast discharge dock in the Gowanus Canal, and Hazel Lake lived about five miles from there, normal, which made it around a hundred miles for us. And if we tried to call a taxi, something mighty queer was going to happen, one way or another.

Before we lugged the box out of the room, Mr. Sheridan went scouting down the corridor, and I followed along, feeling sort of lonely. All hands that could, including the Old Man and the chief mate, had already hit the beach.

Sheridan went clean over to the other side of the ship and aft, to Lloyd Evans' room. Some machine was raising a heck of a racket, like a main engine that had burned out its bearings, and I stopped at the door. But Sheridan went inside. He came out again fast.

"He's shaving," he said. "That's his electric razor going."

"No incantations, sir?"

He frowned. "He's getting prettied up. It's just as I thought."

Of course Evans was getting fixed up to see Hazel Lake.

"Have you figured, sir," I said, "how we're going to—"

"Yes," he said.

We went back and lifted the perfume. Carrying it between us, we hustled it down the corridor. By the time we got it down the companion and out on the main deck, it was getting dark.

The special on duty at the gangway looked about eighty feet tall. But he was one of these sensitive guys who, because his job was only to watch a ladder, got as far away from it as he could and didn't watch it much. He wasn't on the lookout for six-inchers, and in the dusk we slipped that perfume down the gangway soft as a couple of mice swiping cheese.

But I was feeling plenty homesick, or something, when we sneaked into that big dock shed. Man, it was like one of these Grand Cañons.

All this heaving and hauling, jobs I'm used to, eased me some. But I kept thinking in flashes I ought to take steps about being hammered down to nothing like this, do something more to the point than lugging perfume to some other guy's girl.

All at once, as we let down the blasted box for a rest behind a hand truck, I got it.

"A talent scout!" I said.

Sheridan, who had been looking at nothing, looked at me, which was close to nothing.

"A talent scout, and fast!" I said. "That's what we want to locate. Whyn't I think of it before?"

He just kept looking at me.

"We got something," I said. "We're different! Not since Shirley Temple was a baby— Boss, a talent scout from Hollywood would take just one look at us and dig for his fountain pen. Contract? We could dictate it ourselves. And we will, sitting on his sleeve."

I stopped to give him a chance to catch up. But he just smiled dreamily and started to take a fresh grip on the box.

"Only we got to move," I said. "How do we know a lot of other guys haven't been—reduced, like us? And they might be better businessmen than we are. What we want is a signature on the dotted line, quick."

"I must be getting along, Huggins," he said.

"But Mr. Sheridan, you're missing the angle! Once we have that contract, you can buy her perfume by the bathtub! You won't have to do any romantic fade-out. With that kind of moola, you'll look to her the size of a Chicago Bear tackle."

He shook his head. "Not to Miss Lake," he said. "She liked me the little she did because I was big and poor and in love. Are you coming, Huggins?"

I was that dumb, I went along, carrying my half of that perfume, and sneaking along the side of the shed behind a bit of this and a piece of that with that stubborn, gremlin-sized, lovesick Mick. Kibitzer in another man's busted romance, when I might have been climbing the brackets! It made me feel like six inches was very high.

We slid by the customs guard while he was telephoning, and out we go into the street and toward one of the cars parked there. A longshoreman saw us scuttling across the sidewalk.

We crouched behind the rear tire and waited. Would he grab us?

The stevie took a flask out of his pocket, smashed it against the curb and shoved down the street at quite a clip.

"Now what?" I asked Mr. Sheridan. "We can't get much farther toward Miss Lake's without being spotted. Look, sir, it isn't only a movie salary. You must take into account that one hamburger would be enough meat for a week, a doll's house on a fifty-foot lot would make you a duke's estate, and a fifth of rye would keep you happy for—"

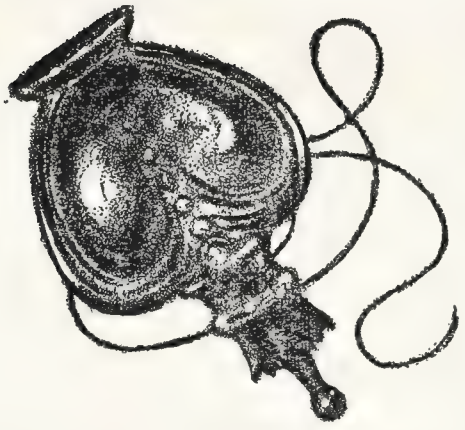
"We're under Evans' car," Sheridan said, "and he'll be driving our way this night."

It was an idea. But I shook my head. "We'll never get a door open."

"We'll travel under the hood," Sheridan said. "Plenty of ways for the likes of us to get up through on the pan."

IT turned out to be a job. We finally made it up through to where the exhaust pipe comes down under the car. Only seamen could have done it. The pan was ankle deep in dust-covered grease.

We hoisted up the perfume, and were making it fast to the oil gauge stick when we heard the thunder of



feet. It was Evans, all right, singing under his breath. He got in. The way he slammed the door knocked us both off our feet onto the grease. Next minute he stepped on the starter. The motor caught, and down we went again, grabbing at each other.

We really had to take it. Even standing still, the old jalopy was like the mother of all earthquakes and the noise—well, give me a volcano letting go.

The car started. We locked our arms over a wire that ran forward to a fog-light, and hung on. She bucked and rocked and dived and soared. It was like that time the hurricane caught us off Bermuda with a light ship, only you couldn't figure when this tremendous big crate was going to bounce.

The engine got hotter and hotter. The grease we were trying to stand on began to warm up and get slippery. We barely stayed alive. And I could have been sitting on a talent scout's desk-blotter fighting off offers! I just clung, but somehow Sheridan managed to shift grips and climb up onto the frame. He looked out through the louver-holes in the hood to see where we were going. I kept watching those spark-plug wires jerking around. We wouldn't even have to sit down to be electrocuted.

Suddenly Sheridan seemed to go nuts. He stripped off his coat, tied the arms around his neck and started for the carburetor. He climbed it, sometimes swinging out with only one hand gripping a control wire when the car jumped. He got up to the air intake and stuffed his coat into it.

The old motor coughed, choked and died. The car coasted to a stop. I felt like breathing again, though I was half cooked. Sheridan came dropping down.

"This is where we get off," he said. "The house is just around the corner. We'll beat him there."

"Not if he leaves the car—"

"Did you ever know of an engineer who'd pass up tinkering?"

We could hear Evans cussing. We unlashed the box and lowered away smartly.

EVANS started on the hood latch. We had to risk scorching. We squeezed past the hot exhaust-pipe and went down the thread hand-over-hand to the ground. Evans had the hood open before I landed on the road.

"Aft," said Sheridan, and I was glad to get away from those Evans feet!

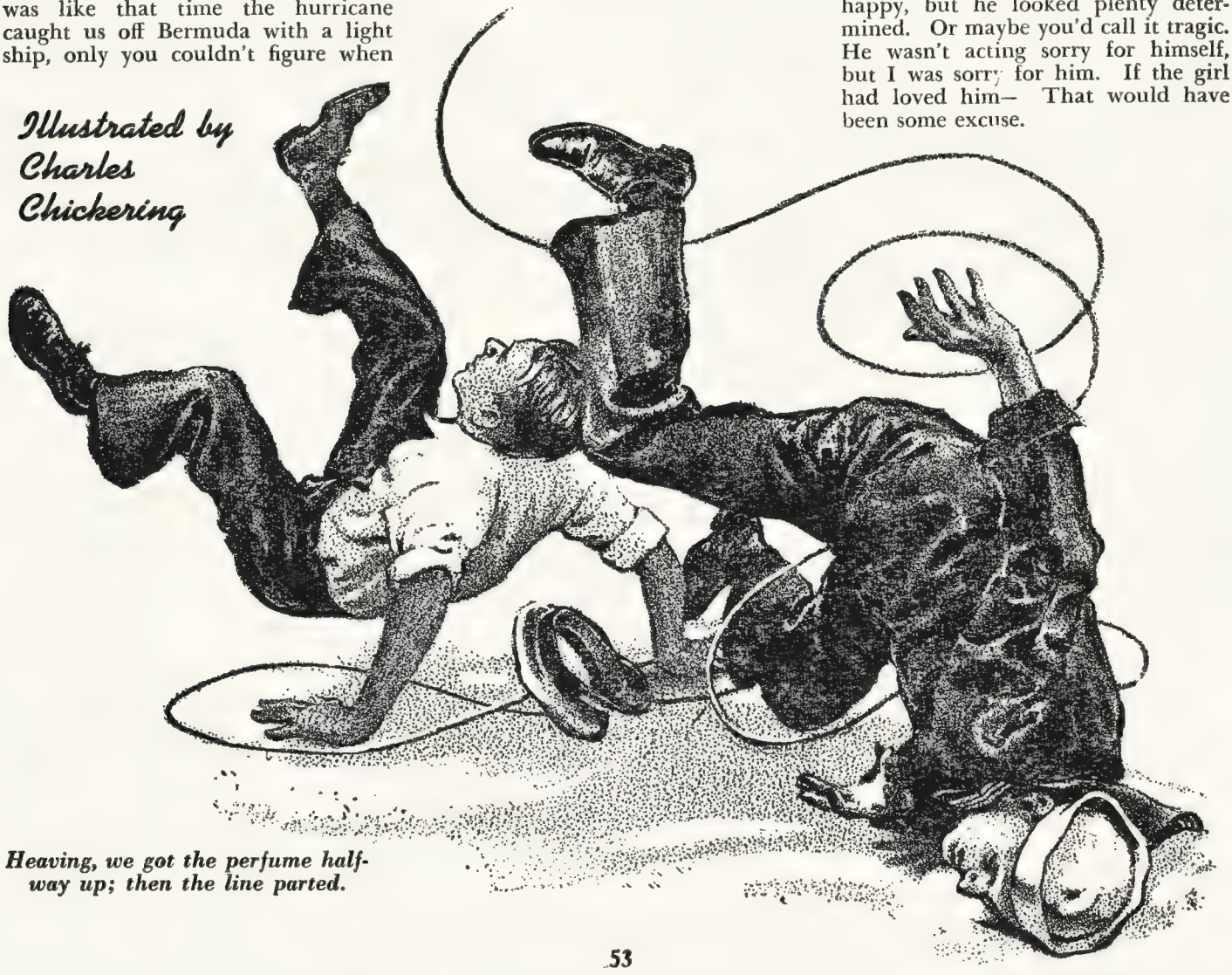
The Lake house may have been around the corner to some people. It was a mile away for us. We walked along in the street beside the curb, which gave complete cover from one side. Before we risked the lighted space around each street-lamp, we stopped and did some looking. Being six inches tall is next thing to being invisible. Only you don't get used to it fast enough to feel safe.

"Once we make delivery of this perfume," I said, "I want to talk to you about my propo—"

"Later," said Sheridan. "Later."

He was steamed up, and lugging away at the box between us till he was nearly towing me. He didn't sound happy, but he looked plenty determined. Or maybe you'd call it tragic. He wasn't acting sorry for himself, but I was sorry for him. If the girl had loved him— That would have been some excuse.

Illustrated by Charles Chickering



Heaving, we got the perfume halfway up; then the line parted.

I tried to quit thinking about him by thinking about me. It's a job to figure out how much your running expenses will be reduced because you've been reduced. Maybe a guy would have to travel in a basket slung under an expensive trained dog to keep from being stepped on. And you'd sure have to keep that dog fed full of meat, just to prevent any mistakes.

Besides working on angles like that, I kept watching behind us, but Evans didn't show. Even a first assistant engineer can't diagnose motor trouble as midget-coat-in-the-air-intake right off the bat. When he did find it, how would that kewpie-sized coat hit him? I couldn't guess.

We came to the Lakes' house: nice enough though old-fashioned and no bigger-looking, to me, than the Custom House. We dragged the box through the hedge, cutting corners, and then on around the back, where there was a porch all covered with vines, country style. The porch was dark and empty. I crossed my fingers.

"We'll leave it up there on the wicker table," Sheridan said, "if we've enough line for the lift."

"And then scram out of here fast, huh, sir?"

He nodded silently.

It was back to more stevedoring for us, because we had to heave that thing up the steps, one by one, and muscle it onto the porch. At the foot of the wicker table we stopped to breathe. By a little light trickling out through a window Sheridan looked at the box.

It was a mess, all right, what with bumps and dirt and grease from the car and sweat from me.

"We'll take out the bottle," he said.

"How's she going to know—"

"There's a card from me tied around the neck of it."

WE got the bottle and shoved the box overside. Then I climbed up the wicker rings of the table-leg with the coil of thread, took a turn through the top and dropped both ends to Sheridan. By the time I had made it down again, he had secured an end round the neck of the bottle.

We tailed onto the line and started heaving. We got the bottle up almost halfway. As we swayed together, the line parted. Cotton stuff.

The bottle came down on the run. It didn't break, but the shock popped the stopper out. It went past my ear like a sixteen-inch shell. Half the perfume gushed out of the overturned bottle onto our legs.

Only it wasn't perfume. It was water. There wasn't so much as a whiff out of the stuff.

We stood there with our feet in the wash of it, and stared at each other, sniffing hard. Sheridan was stunned.

"It don't take any magic, or electronics either, for Lloyd Evans to sneak into your room, empty the perfume down your wash-basin and fill the bottle with water," I said. "This is what that grin was about."

"I'm thinking the same," Sheridan muttered. "By Peter, a man who'd—"

I heard feet thudding around the corner of the house, and caught a glimpse of the black Welshman looming up like an iceberg in the middle watch.

"Take it up with Evans some other time!" I yipped. "We got to hunt a mousehole!"

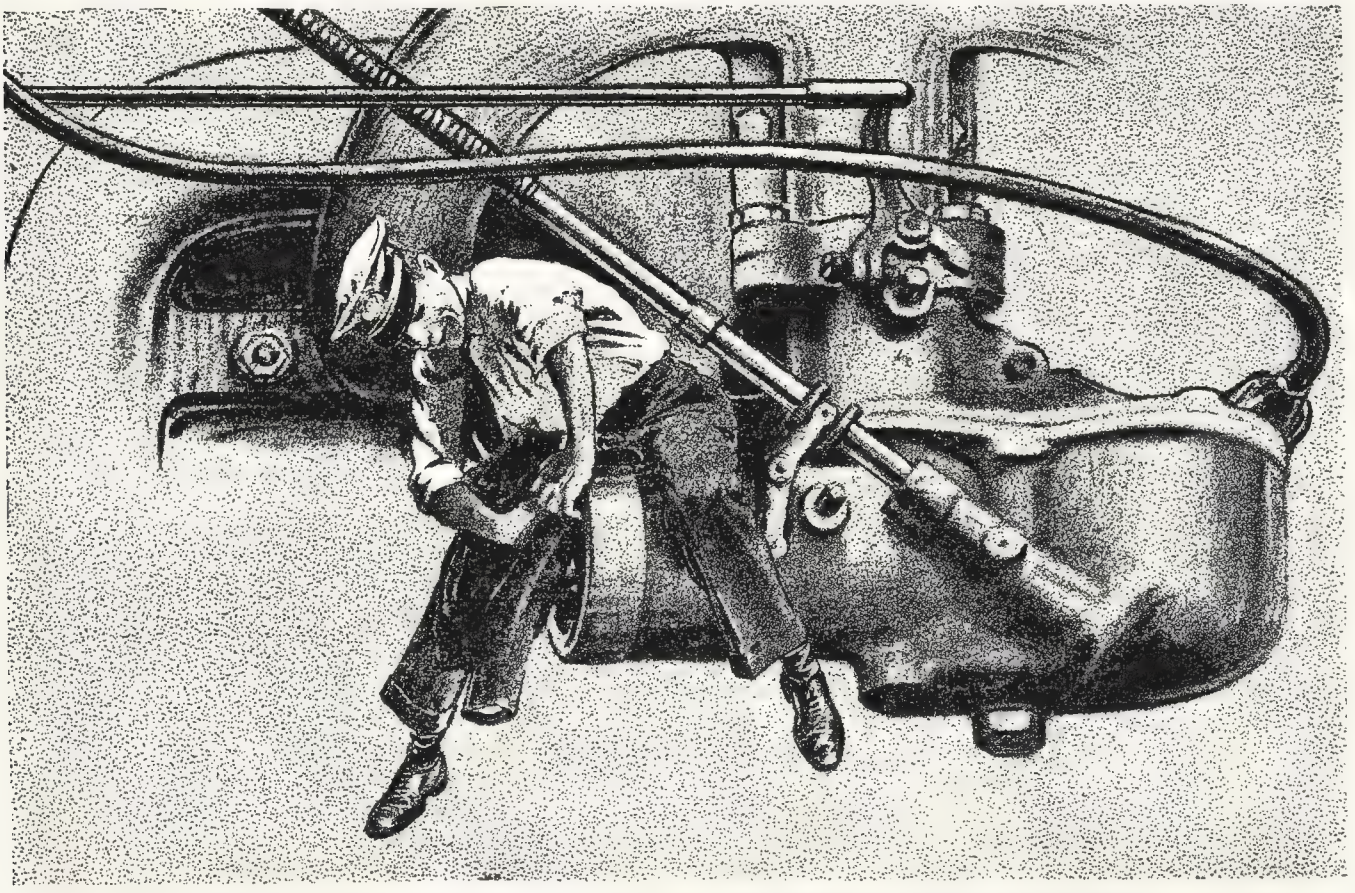
Phil Sheridan took off his high-pressure cap and smacked it down on the porch deck.

"No!" he said. "A man that would pull a trick like that is no bigger than I am!"

A swell theory, and I was proud of him—for a second—as he swung around and marched, stiff as a marlinspike, to meet Evans at the top of the stairs.

"You'll get stepped on!" I yelled, but he never answered. Ridiculous, he looked, like a mouse on his hind-legs getting set to knock a grizzly for a handsome fur rug.

Well, what the heck! By the light from the window I looked in the floor-cracks for a needle or pin. I'm the kind of guy that gives himself every encouragement in a fight. I wanted to be a pain in the ankle to Evans, even if I couldn't be a pain in the neck.



He stuffed his coat into the air intake . . . the old motor coughed, choked and died.

Sheridan stood there like a rock as Evans came closer, and I just stood there. Noble we were, but I was sure my insurance company wasn't going to like this.

Suddenly, *"Pop!"* went the porch light, and I blinked in the glare. The screen door from the house opened, and there was Hazel Lake, as good looking as her photo.

"Phil!" she said to Sheridan, and stretched out her hands. I saw with a jolt that Hazel was no bigger than Phil. In fact, as she reached out her hands to him, she was a head shorter.

"This is going to be sadder than 'Romeo and Juliet'—when Evans starts slapping us down with the flat of his foot," I told myself, and shifted my eyes to him.

Another jolt. He had shrunk too. He was down to our size.

And then I worked it out. We were back!

Yes sir—it was Sheridan and I that had shot up—they had not shot down.

"Hazel!" Phil Sheridan said hoarsely. "Hazel! I—" He pointed to the bottle of perfume on the desk. "It's spilled—and it's only water, anyhow. But I'll get you some—"

SHE was a quick girl. She looked at Phil, standing there in his shirt, smeared up and worn out but not licked, and she didn't ask any questions. It was his eyes she was gazing at. She stooped and touched fingertips to the bottle.

"Why, it's lovely, Phil!" she said. "So delicate—so subtle!"

A quick girl, and one who knew her own mind in a sudden flash.

And all this time Lloyd Evans is standing there on the porch step without a word out of him. Frozen. Why? I think it's because he's clutching a mouse-size coat in his hands, and his eyes are bugging out at Phil's watch-cap lying there on the deck. The cap is still mouse-size too.

When I saw that little cap, I realized it was good-by to our chances of being a panic on the screen and a savings bank off it. I put the side of my foot alongside the cap and slid it under the porch rail off onto the ground.

"Your motor wants you," I said to Evans.

He moved his mouth at me, peered at the micro-coat and backed down the steps. I followed, enjoying the feeling of not needing a pin, even if I had lost a couple million dollars. . . .

And that's the inside story, the one the whole engine-room's been foaming to know, of how a red-headed rope-choker like Phil Sheridan beat out the handsomest guy in the blackgang after being down once for the count. And only six inches high most of the time he was doing it, too!

It must have been electronics. What other explanation fits the facts?

My Most Amusing Experience

(Conditions governing contributions to the department are the same as for the "What Do You Think?" section. See page 49)

Strategy or Tactics?

I HAVE often been amused and in hearty disagreement with the professors who assert that animals do not think, but only react to instinct.

This anecdote is true as gospel:

I had a dog, a common mongrel with all the appearance of a spaniel, short legs, floppy ears, and long hair. My neighbor had a screw-tail bulldog; he likewise was not built to pursue the fleet bunny with any hope of success.

Yet many times I have seen the two scouring the fields. In fact, the bulldog would call about every day, pick up my dog, and laughing, they'd be off. I have caught a glimpse of them, after the rabbit had been raised, falling over themselves, running a dead heat themselves, but being rapidly left by a cottontail, who seemed more annoyed at being disturbed than worried.

Then, with astonishing frequency, they began to show up with a very dead and patently overhauled rabbit between them. This puzzled me until one day I happened to see the end of one of their cross-country races. It seems that the rabbit, bored with such slow pursuers, who didn't even have breath enough to bark, would head for a culvert about fifteen feet long and not big enough for a dog to enter. Into the culvert he fled, not far ahead of the bench-legged pursuers.

Both dogs went about their duty with an aplomb that bespoke many such performances. My dog hit the culvert right behind the contemptuous rabbit, and lost no time in raising Merry Ned, while the bulldog continued on past the entrance, and took up his position just above the exit, out of sight.

There he waited in evident expectancy and approval of his friend's choice of vituperation. Periodically the noisy one would raise his head to see if anything had yet happened. When he did, the other, not taking his eyes off the exit, would wag his rump in encouragement, and with a "Nope, not yet!" continue his vigil. More storming and digging, and then the rabbit, a nervous fellow anyway, would break. A sudden flurry at the exit—and deep thinking and planning had triumphed again!

L. H.

"Gee! I Forgot to Ask!"

BACK in July of 1943, we were anticipating becoming proud parents. Likewise were our good friends and neighbors, whom I shall call Bill and Mary. Since we presumed several more days were left, *I* decided I should have a couple of wisdom teeth out, and arranged an appointment for late one afternoon.

Feeling slightly extracted that evening, I remained home and later thought a ride in the air would be most enjoyable. So the four of us—Bill, Mary, my wife, and I—went for a drive. About ten o'clock we returned home. The others ate a snack. Shortly before midnight, all retired. For several minutes I lay trying to get comfortable, when suddenly, on went the lights next door. We knew what was happening, and offered our aid. When a taxi failed to respond to a call, I got the car to drive Bill and Mary to the hospital, while my wife stayed with their older girl, Betty.

At the hospital we were unable to gain admittance at the ambulance entrance, so I dashed around to the front desk and sheepishly said that we had a baby coming at the back door! That was twelve-forty-five A. M. Bill and Mary went in. I returned home. About three A. M. Bill returned, and my wife came back with the good news that a little girl had arrived.

Too excited to sleep, we sat around quite a while. About four A. M. my wife remarked she felt uneasy. A call to the doctor, his reassurance that there were several more days, and we went to bed again. However, at four-thirty my wife was certain, so another call to the doctor, and we were on our way to the hospital.

At five A. M. I again dashed around to the front desk and bravely announced to the same attendant that a baby was coming at the back door.

Astonished when she saw me, the attendant said: "Haven't you been here before tonight?"

"Yes," I said. "But this time it's my wife!"

A nurse met my wife. I parked the car and proceeded to the prospective fathers' waiting-room to "sweat it out." Not too long afterward, at six A. M., the doctor told me the baby was here. A little later a nurse let me have a first glimpse of the baby. I was unimpressed.

In all the activity, I had forgotten about the tooth-extractions, but was now aware of a rather severe throbbing in my jaw and head. So I stepped to the nurse's desk to ask for an aspirin. "Congratulations!" she greeted me. "What did you get? A girl or a boy?"

Completely flabbergasted, I could say only: "Gee! I forgot to ask!"

R. F. M.

The Way of the Wilderness

It is a savage way; yet to one man it taught wisdom.

by Michael Oblinger

A HARD heart and a black record trailed along with Cotter Simms until, in due course, he came to a full stop somewhere Back in the Beyond, which is the name given to the place farthest west of the Mackenzie and farthest south of the Yukon a man can get. Every place else from there is too far to reach in moccasins or gumboots, a portable canoe, and the very best of intentions. Farther on, in fact, is the Beyond itself, sitting on the broken steps to shaggy mountains and bruising its haggard old head on the ruins and scattered remains of a land gorged by glaciers and battered down with the winds.

Glad to go as far as he had, and thankful he'd been able to, Simms settled down to a season of quiet. Nothing more to bother him now. He was safe and secure. The bush gave him meat; a crooked stick stirred up a garden. He found sugar in trees, salt in the hills, and he could trap more fur than he needed to clothe himself. Being fixed here for life was such a relief after fifteen years of gun-jumping the law, that Cotter changed his course of thinking.

The spot where he had set up his shack had a top view all around of lakes and rivers and magnificent trees. There were hills and heights ranging off into the blue melting distance. Cotter, who always had a word for things, was stumped to recall just the right one to express his feelings when looking off here, or how he could appropriately describe in any kind of language the amazing grandeur and beauty and variety, the extent, the height, the endless, boundless, superlative scenery that closed him in.

"It's terrific," he said.

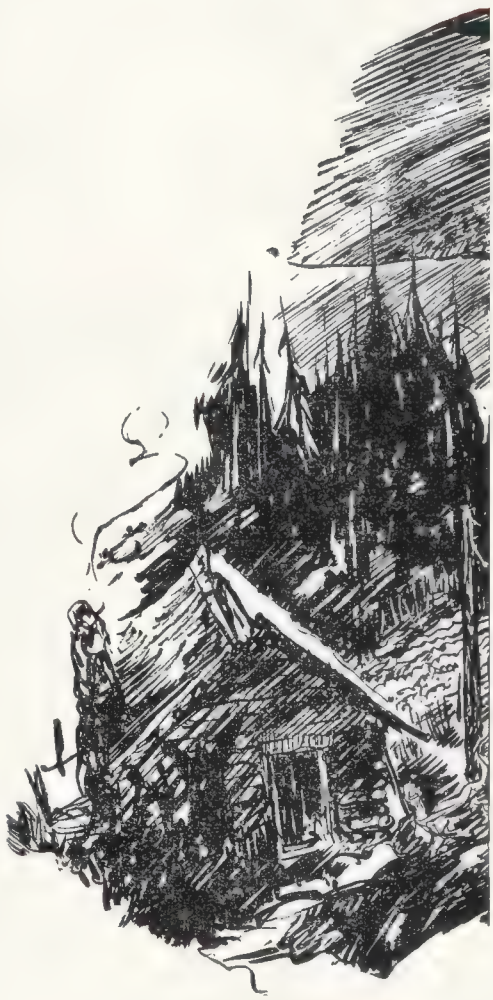
It made Cotter think. It always made Cotter feel something within him, made him want to swell possessively and burst out in song. It made him want to get drunk and tell the world it could go to hell to find a better place. Of all the places, this was *It*. It was his. He had priority claims, squatter's rights. So long as there was breath and life, he could be undisputed owner and king.

"It's just like I was God," he thought. "I'm the boss, the big-shot. What I say around here goes. The only part I don't like about this set-up is that what I say I gotta say to myself. I can give orders, but there aint nobody to hear or carry them out. Just the same, it's a whale of a job being top-kick over as many miles as I can see, over every blamed single thing growing and living in it." . . .

During his second year Back of Beyond, Cotter made a scout back to a trading-post he knew of, replenished his ammunition and was able to get a few packages of garden seed. Returning to Back of Beyond, he took up farming in a small way. He had two fawns, one a doe and the other a buck. He had a fenced pasture and barn, a flock of grouse taken when young; five black Canadian ducks almost full grown; a small goat, named Billy; and now one evening, as a lingering July sun washed gold down the slopes, piling up heaps of nuggets, he yearned with a powerful yearning for the company of a dog.

It was strong in him, strong as craving for drink. But it was different, too. Drink, when you had it, gave only a momentary kick; whereas a dog was beside you constantly. A pooch was better than a friend. Most friends, in Cotter's experience, lasted no longer than one's present roll. But you could starve a dog, and he'd still lick your boots. You could beat him, and he'd come back, crawling. That was the difference. To a dog, you were God, and it was better to be a god to a dog than no god at all. Out here, away from dicks and dopes and low-class chiselers and other cheap human fry, none of which you regretted leaving behind, it would be pleasant to own a live thing that could look up to you.

Cotter strode past his garden patch, following a path that led to the rock. It was a big rock firmly planted at one side of the high, fertile plateau. From here he had clear sight into the valley that extended north a great distance, much farther than he had ever been. But at this end he had explored every foot. A small, spring-



fed lake made source for a stream, the stream wandered off through alternate meadow and bush. Deer and grouse were plentiful because this was rich feeding-ground. It was also, Cotter had soon discovered, rich hunting-ground for lynx, coyotes and wolves. And with the idea bursting in him of how he might possibly acquire a dog, if he were patient enough, he took vigil on the rock in the waiting twilight.

It was a favorite pastime of his anyway, sitting here on the rock, a pair of field-glasses to his eyes. The deceiving appearance of quiet always gave

Illustrated by John Costigan, N.A.

"It's just like I was God," Cotter thought. "I'm the boss, the bigshot . . . . top-kick over as many miles as I can see."

the impression at first of a peaceful picture in which nothing ever stirred. Then, suddenly, a scatter of wildly whirring wings and objects shooting their straight, low course ahead. A few feathers floating gently on the air. A gray, lank shape with a bird in its mouth, sliding off into the bushes.

Quiet again. A deer would fall next, maybe. Scarcely an evening went by without something getting killed. As a killer himself, Cotter took less sanguinary interest in the proceedings than he might have a few years before. The skilled technique of a timber wolf was effective but crude. Cotter saw flaws in it. The word *brutal* didn't occur to him but lately he'd begun to feel sorry for the deer. Tonight, however, he hoped that plenty of them would be slaughtered. Otherwise some bitch wouldn't sneak food to her lair, and he wouldn't find his wolf-pup. A wolf-pup would be like a real dog, he had heard, if you got them young enough. In July, the whelps were subsisting on a mixed diet of milk and meat. Just the right time to take one of them—before it was weaned.

"I'm sure gonna have me a dog for company," Cotter muttered, adjusting his glasses. "A real wolf. I'll tame it. I'll make it mind."

For three nights Cotter sat on the rock. For three nights nothing happened at all. It was as though, tantalizing him, aware of his designs, the hunters had moved far up the valley out of sight. All this lower end was tranquil-tired, dreamily asleep in the blue-washed light; pines stood still as death; the meadows shone dully in a drenching-wet dew. Surely if anything stalked here in secret and murder was done, Cotter thought, it must be so far under cover it couldn't be seen or heard. That wasn't likely either,

His first bullet staggered the buck. Cotter ran over with the rope.

when you took into account how far off the coyotes howled and how distant the sounds were of whirring grouse and ducks, and the loons calling.

Three nights of disappointment sitting on that cold rock, growing anger, nourishing hate—cursing his luck.

COTTER said to himself, finally, that third night: "They're doing it o' purpose, that's what they are. They're hep to what I intend to do, but I'll show 'em, by God. I'll bait the bitches with my own shot meat. I'll show 'em!"

Odd how ideas came when a man was sunk, when he felt he was licked, Cotter reflected. Now you could go home and to bed with reasonable assurance that your chances still were good of finding a dog, one you could train and which would look up to you. Billy, the goat, the ducks, the grouse and the two fawns you were proud to own. They were friendly. But they looked up to you only for food. Actually, you cared more for them than they did for you. They had no understanding or appreciation —just a sort of dumb acceptance of another living thing that supplied what they liked in the way of food and shelter.

"I just got to own a dog," Cotter said.

Armed with his .30-.30, and carrying a coil of rope, Cotter descended the steep rock slope of the plateau on the afternoon of the following day, struck off from the lake through jack-pine and spruce, crawled up to a sizable meadow, which sat close to the valley's western wall, and waited for the inevitable appearance of deer. Sooner or later, experience had proved, they would come, a pair or more. Never had they failed. Here was the place he usually shagged to, when his supply of meat ran low.

Cotter waited. A fine buck and three does moved out of a thicket, caught his scent, and stood terrified. His first bullet staggered the buck. Then it leaped and fell, crushing down the tall grass. It kicked spasmodically, lay still. Flicking their tails, the does disappeared in the thicket. Cotter ran over with the rope, slip-noosed the buck's hindlegs and presently strung it up from a limb beyond the reach of coyotes, yet low enough, he figured, for a fair-sized wolf to jump.

He said aloud: shaking the sweat from his dripping face: "Now I'll step around out of the wind with my glasses an' wait."

It was a long wait. He dropped the mosquito net rolled above the brim of his hat, put on gloves and tried to sleep. Insects crawled up his legs. He tied the bottoms of his trousers with long ends of his shoelaces. A bluejay sputtered from a poplar limb. A leafy branch, dangling above his head, made a noise like two dames whispering at a movie. The sun which ought to go down for its short dip behind the horizon so there could be twilight again—which was when the killers came out of hiding—sat stubborn and still in a blazing sky. Well, he could wait.

Cotter woke from a cat-nap, jumping inside. He grabbed up his glasses and a handful of grass. Broad daylight, yet two killers snarled near the buck. The buck swung from the rope. One of the wolves, or both of them, had hit him hard. Their fangs had lashed and cut, leaving exposed flesh along the buck's neck, and there he was, swinging. He was swinging like a crazy pendulum on a clock. Above him, the branch bent and twisted. Beneath him, a squirming furry ball rolled over and over, separated, merged, and rolled over and over. It rolled into a bush, struck a tree. Snarling, snapping, two forms leaped away—darted in, darted out. Cotter sat transfixed. Must be males, he thought. Only males could fight like that. Once you had seen men fight like that. Those two wolves must be fighting for something more than meat. Meat was plentiful at this season; it could be got easily. No sense in putting up such a struggle for one dead buck.

Cotter wiped off his glasses and looked again. He felt a sudden swelling in his throat.

"My God, they're both bitches!" he exclaimed.

He sat with the glasses pressed hot to his eyes. His stomach squirmed. Even a killer used to blood and killing as he was—a cold killer, the papers said—he couldn't take much more of that. But he could understand now what it was all about. Those bitches had hungry mouths to feed. Nursing and caring for their young made them hard put, maybe, to find enough meat

in the time they had for hunting. This buck was a rich haul, a sure haul, and each of those mothers could fancy herself taking the whole of it. She could fancy herself dragging it in huge chunks, being proud she could, and feeling glad inside.

AND so they fought more fiercely and terribly than males fought. No male had such fury. Cotter remembered hearing long ago the expression, "He fought like a bitch," and now he knew its meaning. Originally gray, both bitches had become red. Their necks were cut; their ears were in strings. One of them could barely stand. She was dying on her feet. She was wobbling, ready to fall. Yet she faced the other one, her spirit steady, defiance showing in her dripping fangs.

At last the fight was over and the winning bitch stood on unsteady legs, too weak to jump for the buck. But being wise, she squatted down until her strength would return. The losing bitch was hid by the grass. Cotter saw no movement in the grass. She must be dead; anything beaten so bad had to be stone dead. She would lie there to be picked over by the crows and coyotes. Her death was not one death, as in the case of a male, but the death of her whole brood, for her life was bound up in theirs.

Within a few minutes, the winning bitch rose, sniffed, walking away from the buck as though she meant to leave. But abruptly she turned, gliding close to the ground, and leaped. The deer went up in a swinging arc, the bitch clinging to it. There was a noise like a pistol shot. The leaves swished, the branch creaked and split. Then there was a thump, as deer and bitch hit the ground simultaneously.

Cotter grinned, for the first time, in sheer admiration.

"You was lucky," he said. "You didn't know that limb would break. But you sure hit that deer hard. You sure did."

He put down his glasses. He had to wait a long time yet. She would eat until she was full. She would chew and tear up the buck in more convenient pieces. That was the way they always did.

With his naked eyes, suddenly, Cotter saw grass moving and falling in a straight path toward the west wall of the valley. In amazement, he caught up his glasses, wondering what it could be. The movement was like that of a man crawling low over the ground, stopping to rest, going on. The grass, over waist-high here, hid whatever was moving, and it couldn't be a man. It couldn't be a coyote or a small deer. They didn't crawl. This was a crawler. Moisture spilled out on Cotter's upper lip. He felt creepy, seeing something he couldn't understand. It might be the devil crawling. After seeing all that spilled blood, witnessing so much fighting and killing—it was the devil crawling. Cotter's skin crawled too. His scalp itched and prickled and his eyes burned.

He said: "What in God's name can that thing be?"

Then it came to him in a flash: The beaten bitch, not yet quite dead, unable to walk—it must be a couple of her legs were broken—now spent her last breath, her fine, courageous fighting breath, to get home to her whelps. No meat this time, but she could still give 'em milk. That was the woman for you; that was the mother, Cotter thought. That was the undying instinct of protection she had for them.

He had two fawns, a flock of grouse, five ducks and a small goat named Billy. Now he yearned for the company of a dog.

In all this unclean, bloody, cruel, killing world—it was that instinct that alone seemed good. It was the only decent thing in a hating world of cheap chiselers and dirty dicks and grafters and scum.

"I hope she makes it," Cotter exclaimed.

He had almost forgotten he wanted a wolf pup. He was thinking: "It would be great if she could live. It would be fine if her legs could mend. It would be grand if she could raise them whelps of hers yet."

THEN he remembered. He could feel brightness in his eyes and lightness in his chest. Day, swinging down toward twilight, was colored over the mountains in a spreading, climbing garden of crimson roses.

"I'll get my dog sure now," he said, reassuring himself.

He followed her cautiously, staying a fair distance behind. He had the help of his glasses. She reached the wall that sloped upward, and dragged over the rocks and clung to steep places with her beaten head close to the ground. She whined once or twice when she thought she couldn't make it, but she would try again and fail, and try again and succeed. Not her legs but her spine was broken, Cotter perceived. Her hindquarters were useless and had to be pulled along like a load. The struggle of the bitch through the scattered débris of the slope was a greater struggle than the fight. Watching her and wanting a word, Cotter thought of *terrific,* and shunned it. He thought of *stupendous,* and it was sniveling and weak, fit only for gaping, mouthing fools. What that bitch was doing was wordless, inconceivable. It was the instinct born in her never to die. It was all that was good in a world full of hate and death.

Next moment the bitch climbed over a rock and disappeared. It must be her lair. Scrambling upward as fast as he could in the fear of losing her, Cotter reached the spot and looked down into a sunken pocket or pit, overhung on one side by a broken slab of shale. It made a nice nest for them. Shadows fell cool from a high-standing cliff behind. The bitch had simply fallen in, and now she was there with her whelps, her eyes glowing like lamps; and Cotter saw three furry little cubs with pricking ears and coal-black noses. He saw the noses sniff strangely, and the pups were looking at him, and they were looking at her. Obviously they were afraid of her. The smell she exuded was a different smell, but they liked it—they liked blood.

Suddenly, before Cotter realized what they were doing, he saw, in horror and disgust, sharp tearing little fangs, and he heard them snarling, and the bitch made no effort to protect herself at all.

In red-hot fury, Cotter raised his rifle and fired four times. The three whelps kicked and lay still. And the mother lay still. And the quiet was something deep in the ground and high over the hills. Cotter spraddled there, slightly swaying, his jaw hard set.

He said aloud, feeling the blaze of the slow-dropping sun, aware of a curious choking in him: "After all she did for 'em, those blasted little cubs!"

He turned and strode away. At home, a few hours later, he ate his supper, did up his chores, then sat down on the front stoop to watch the changing lights in the northwest sky. But tonight, tired as he was, it was difficult to sit there and keep his thoughts steady. The events of the afternoon had made a deep impression on him. The effect wasn't good. It wasn't at all the way he had hoped it would be, ending up by his coming home, proud and happy, with a young wolf pup tucked under his arm.

And he couldn't understand—wanting that dog as he had, and still did, it being almost an obsession—why he had got so out of control, so worked up over the bitch, that he had deliberately raised his rifle and shot all of them.

Cotter muttered: "I must 'a' been clear, stark nuts!"

Yet in a way, Cotter thought, when you stopped to consider what that mother-wolf had gone through getting home to her cubs, only to have them turn on her; when you considered the effort she had made crawling with that broken spine, not caring for herself or what might happen to her, a fine mother trying only to protect her young—then your own action, even though it had been prompted by anger, didn't seem so blamed crazy, after all.

"But I still want to own an' train a dog so it will sort of look up to me," Cotter said.

Shaking his head, he rose wearily from the stoop and clanked inside. He lighted a candle and sat down on his bunk. The quiet came around him. It was the only thing he had never got used to—that quiet. It reminded him of a lot of unseen, untalking people sitting in a room. All they did was breathe. It made a kind of rhythm flowing to his ears. It would grow louder and louder until, suddenly, a loon would call down at the lake, or a coyote would start yipping, or a wolf would break out in a long-drawn howl.

Cotter groaned: "I don't know why I shot all them cubs, dang it!"

He didn't know, and yet he did. He knew, yet couldn't quite explain it. A dog would be company at a time like this: A little mutt sprawled out on the floor, its black button of a nose tucked into its front paws, its eyes grateful and loving.

"Hell," Cotter whispered, "it's all I need to make this place complete. I got ever'thing else, a home, a farm, an' all the country as far as I can see. An' I killed the one thing I needed most to make life almost perfect."

In a sense, it wasn't his fault, it was the fault of those blasted, uncaring, thoughtless cubs. When you had a mother like they had, Cotter reflected, suffering and struggling for you, giving you everything she had, it was downright wicked and indecent to turn on her like that. Of course, being wolves, they couldn't reason like a man could. A man had more understanding. He could use his head. God had given him brains.

Cotter sat up quickly then, sat up straight. From the base of his spine to the crown of his head, a curious fiery tingling ran up, almost paralyzing him. It could be he was getting a stroke. But it wasn't a stroke; it was a thought, powerful and revealing. It almost literally grabbed him by the hair of the head and shook him. Man had brains, all right—reason. And when his mind tugged on a thing long enough, and really took hold, what was dark became light, and you could put ideas and impressions together and at last make some sense out of them.

NOW he had it. How could you blame those little wolf whelps, acting on impulse, when you yourself, equipped with a mind capable of reasoning out right and wrong, had deliberately turned on your mother too? You had ravaged her as savagely as the whelps had torn the mother-wolf. Every one of your crimes, your killings, had been like gnashing teeth upon the spirit of a woman who had sacrificed everything for you. If the need had risen, she would have given you her life.

Here in this country, Cotter reasoned, where the days are long and the nights are still, a man had plenty of room to see and think. He had to understand just what was happening around him in order to understand himself. There was a connection to everything, a sort of link. You could see your own mother in the mother-wolf. You could see yourself in one of those nasty, killing little whelps. You knew now exactly what you were and what you should do about it. What you should do, you would do right now. Now, at last, not a dog, but you, you also had something to look up to.

His restlessness gone, his mind at peace again, Cotter spent the remainder of the night packing for the long journey back.

Cotter felt a sudden swelling in his throat. "My God, they're both bitches!" he exclaimed.

The Chance Island

This third true story of adventure behind the enemy lines deals with the hazardous exploits of Lt. William Horrigan in establishing an observation post on a tiny island off the Malay Peninsula in Japanese-controlled waters.

by LT. COM. RICHARD KELLY

THE tall English Wing Commander stared incredulously at the two young American naval officers. It was stifling hot in the coconut palm *basha* air-operations room at the huge Allied naval base of Trincomalee in Ceylon. The date—September 5, 1944.

Slowly he shook his head. "I couldn't let you fly up there in daylight," he said. "That's over a thousand miles behind Jap lines. Might be a pretty bad show, actually."

Lt. Bill Horrigan of Brooklyn, N. Y., and Lt. Comdr. Ken Pier of Hollywood, California, the two OSS officers, glanced at each other. It was Pier's cue to try another tack:

"We've had no information on that area for nearly three years. It's too far for a photo reconnaissance. We know there used to be a small wolfram mine on the island, and the Japs might be working it. We'd like to have a couple of hours of daylight at least to look over the place before we try to land our team."

The Wing Commander stroked his mustache without comment. Horrigan, a former New York lawyer, took up the plea. "But everything depends on the success of this mission, sir! No one has a clue as to what's going on up there—except that it's plenty. If we get set up there, we can also help rescuing airmen. We know the mission was approved as a night op., but to land these fellows completely blind at night would be murder—they wouldn't have a chance. None of us would, for that matter!"

Horrigan paused and glanced at the young RAF pilots and navigators who were present to help plan the mission. They would fly the Catalinas. He had watched them when the proposal had first been made and had seen that they were surprised. Now every face was alive with interest. It was evident that they had been itching for a job like this.

The Wing Commander sighed. It was hard to refuse these Americans. "It's never been tried, chums, but come back at tea-time, and I'll let you know."

Driving back to their OSS Maritime Base at Dead Man's Cove, Horrigan and Pier discussed their prospects. It was significant that they hadn't been turned down immediately. They knew that the most serious objection to their proposal was that it meant flying through the dreaded "Hole" in broad daylight.

The Hole was a narrow passage between the Andaman and Nicobar islands. The Japs had radar on both sides of the passage, and ready planes at near-by airfields. Once spotted in the Hole, the ninety-knot Catalinas wouldn't have a chance with the shore-based Jap fighters.

Well, they'd have the verdict in a few hours. Meanwhile, they could complete final preparations for their mission, the first of an exciting series which would be among the most daring ever accomplished by the Office of Strategic Services in Southeast Asia.

The objective of the projected daytime flight was to land a reconnaissance party on Davis Island, one of a small group that skirted the western coast of Thailand* in the Andaman Sea at the extreme eastern approaches of the Indian Ocean. The recce party of two jungle-trained OSS paratroopers, with a native interpreter radio operator, was to explore the possibilities of Davis or some other island for the establishment of a secret OSS base.

High-speed surface craft would then be secretly infiltrated, and the Allies would have an invaluable clandestine organization over one thousand miles in the Jap rear. Prime function of the base would be to gather intelligence on Jap air and shipping movements in the area. Another highly important project was to set up a convenient point of contact with the growing Thai underground movement sponsored by OSS. Weather information for the Allied air forces, the rescue of downed Allied air crews, and sabotage of near-by Jap installations were among the projected developments.

In addition to the previously stated perils of the long flight to Davis, there was the threat from Victoria Point. This was the major Jap sea and air base on the entire coast and it was just a few miles from the projected base. At Victoria the Japs had airfields, seaplane bases and a naval base. Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander in the theater, was particularly interested in knowing something of Jap activities around Victoria Point, and had given most enthusiastic approval to the project. Horrigan and Pier knew they were shooting for big stakes, and if only the Wing Commander would let them try it by daylight, they felt their chance of initial success would be greatly increased.

PROMPTLY at four that afternoon the two hopeful officers were standing before the Wingco in the *basha*. The Britisher smiled at them. "What chance do I have with both you and my pilots against me? They've convinced me it's a worth-while bet. We'll give it a whirl—but remember, we can't be taking chances like this all the time. I've got to have a few planes for our regular patrol operations. You can take off at 0800 tomorrow. That will give you nearly three hours of daylight to look over the islands before you land your men. Cheerio—and good luck!"

The next morning two big Catalinas took off. "Cats" were the only available planes with sufficient range

*Correct for 1944. On September 9th, 1945, the name was officially changed back to Siam.

Job

Illustrated by
Sgt. John McDermott

for such a mission. As was customary, two planes made the trip, one with the landing-party with Horrigan in command, the other with Pier aboard as escort, for should any mishap occur, the crew of a single plane forced down so far from base would not have the remotest chance of getting back.

The first few hours were uneventful, but on toward noon when they were due to hit the Hole, the two big planes let down to where it seemed they must surely hit the surface.

As Horrigan remembers it: "We were flying so low that we were leaving a wake. The sea was fairly rough with the usual swells and it took some mighty fine flying to keep above them. The idea was to fly as close as possible to the 'deck,' in the hope that the Jap radar wouldn't pick us up. We were about halfway through, and I was watching the mountain peaks on one side when I heard over the intercom: *'Port blister to Pilot—ships sighted dead ahead!'*

"We were ten or twenty feet above the water and quickly changed course, coming lower if that could be possible. We had some tense moments as we went by that convoy. There were nine ships in it. We couldn't tell whether or not they had spotted us, and we sure didn't wait around to find out. I guess they didn't, because we just kept going and nothing else happened.

"That was a pretty big convoy for these parts, and we had some discussion as to how we'd like to send back news of it to headquarters, but it would have been suicide to break radio silence. Furthermore, our primary mission was to land our men and get away without compromising the area. We all felt pretty bad about letting such a target get away, but we also felt pretty lucky that we had seen them first.

and EXPERIENCE

"We crept along . . . the vines kept tangling around my arms. Everyone was a little jumpy."

"Four hours later we were approaching Davis. It gave me a funny feeling to think that we were the first white men to see it in nearly three years—maybe longer. As we slowly circled, my first impression was that it would never do for our purposes. It was volcanic in origin, and it looked like the two humps of a camel jutting straight up from the sea. Seconds later my first impression was reinforced as I caught sight of a junk lying on a small beach in the southeast corner of the island. There was a crowd of about forty people standing around the junk, all waving up at us—probably thought we were Japs. There was nothing secret about this place, I thought, and thanked God that the Wingco had permitted us to see it in the daylight. Had we landed our recce party here blind, they would almost certainly have been caught!"

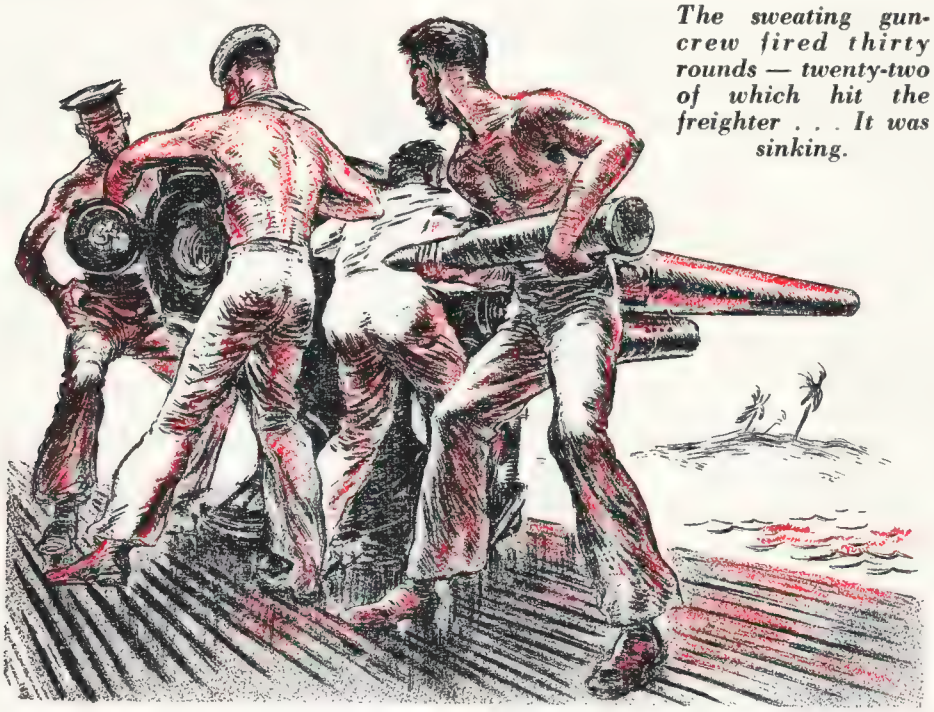
Realizing that Davis was completely unsatisfactory, Horrigan ordered his signalman to flash his decision to Pier in the other plane. Blinker was used because at the time they were less than forty miles from the Jap airfields at Victoria Point, and a radio contact would have summoned Jap planes within minutes.

"Island unsuitable." blinked the signalman. *"Same here. Let's try Chance,"* came the reply, and the two slow-moving Catalinas wheeled around and headed south. Chance Island was the alternate that had been selected, should Davis prove impossible.

An hour later they were circling Chance. It looked perfect—there was no sign of native craft or huts. About three miles long and half a mile wide, it was split in the center by a small inlet that from the air looked perfect for concealing small boats. The whole island was covered by dense green jungle. This would be it.

First one plane and then the other set down gracefully in the deep blue of the Indian Ocean. The island lay drowsing in the twilight, a hazy backdrop to the instant activity that turned the two planes into fortresses gently riding the swells. On the wings were crouched RAF men with tommy-guns readied: the black mouths of the manned machine-guns pointed toward the island.

A large rubber boat was quickly inflated and lowered into the water. The men who were to make the reconnaissance assembled—Lt Gregory Coutoupis of Brooklyn, N. Y., Lt. James Fine of Pennsylvania, and "Chee Chee," a native Chinese Malayan who spoke several dialects of the area.



The sweating gun-crew fired thirty rounds — twenty-two of which hit the freighter . . . It was sinking.

A slim five-foot boy of about twenty, Chee Chee was considered pretty reliable, but he had one maddening eccentricity. In spite of everything that could be done, he would never keep his shoes laced. Immune to all threats, he would invariably be seen padding around with the laces trailing after him. When called to account, he never knew how it had happened. Horrigan noticed now with surprise that for his first mission Chee Chee's shoes were laced.

The men and their gear were helped aboard. "Good luck!" called Horrigan. "See you in a few days, 'Horrible,'" they replied, "and don't be late!"

In a few seconds the soft swish of the paddles grew fainter as they headed through the shark-infested water toward the shore. Their parting remark had referred to the prearranged plan whereby Horrigan, generally known as "Horrible," was to pick them up by submarine six days later.

It was beginning to grow dark now, and the pilots were anxious to take off while there was still some light. Horrigan knew that night take-offs on the ocean were most dangerous—in the darkness the plane might hit a sudden swell that would send them to the bottom in seconds. With crossed fingers he watched anxiously as the boat neared the beach. Then he saw the three small figures land, pick up the boat and dash with it into the underbrush of the dark jungle.

A few minutes later a blinking flashlight sent the "Okay," and with a deafening roar the two big planes taxied seaward into the twilight. Stretching out gratefully on the floor of the plane, Horrigan relaxed at last—the first phase of the operation was under way.

A DISCUSSION was going on in the nose of the plane. Now that the job had been accomplished, would they dare break radio silence to report the convoy they had sighted on the way down? Horrigan listened carefully—he'd be willing to bet these pilots would chance it and make the report. He was right—the skipper's voice over the intercom was saying now: *"Pilot to crew: I've decided to report those babies we saw going through the Hole. Keep a sharp lookout. The Japs may come after us."*

But the two planes flew that night without incident; and at base the next morning they learned that the pilot's message had been immediately relayed to a ready sub, and that a goodly part of the Jap convoy was by now at the bottom of the ocean.

There was only one day to wait now until Horrigan should return to Chance by sub to pick up the recce group. He spent it checking his supplies and preparing for the trip. No word had come from Chance, but there was nothing to do but to go ahead to the rendezvous on the twelfth as had been agreed. . . .

On the morning of the eighth, he left from Trincomalee on a large British sub. They were a strange assortment, and Horrigan grinned to himself as he imagined what his law-office clients might think if they saw him now. Like the rest, he was dressed for the stifling atmosphere of the sub in a native sarong made from red-flowered calico, his Navy cap on the back of his head, and soft straw sandals on his feet.

For a skipper they had Black Jack Hoskins, a fabulous figure credited with having "the most colorful vocabulary in the entire British Navy." The trip in the slow-moving sub would take about four days; the highlight of it for Horrigan was the

As a result he spent what he recalls today as, "the toughest night of my life. We landed in rubber boats about six-thirty P.M. All of us carried mosquito bars, wore long trousers and were well rubbed with mosquito-repellent. That didn't make a bit of difference. After a few minutes we were pouring the stuff over our heads and drenching our clothes. Those mosquitoes seemed to take it as a relish with good American white meat as the main course. Talk about your Jersey mosquitoes! I'd take a hundred of them any day to one of those man-eaters. They bit us right through our dungarees, trousers and underwear, and by morning we were in sad shape."

message that came from the men on Chance that they had completed a successful reconnaissance, and would keep the appointed rendezvous.

It was noontime of the fourth day when the submerged sub arrived off Chance. Horrigan was at the periscope as Black Jack gave orders to circle the island in an effort to spot the signal panels of the recce party. The rocky shore was bare of any signals; Horrigan kept swinging the periscope.

Suddenly dead ahead he saw a strange black object floating just below the surface. He turned to Hoskins:

"Take a look at this, Skipper! What in hell is it?"

Hoskins' answer was a long curse. "A mine—British at that—fifteen degrees starboard." With a shout he signaled the helmsman, and the big sub swung to the right as Horrigan watched the floating death slowly drift by them. A few more yards, and they would have had it!

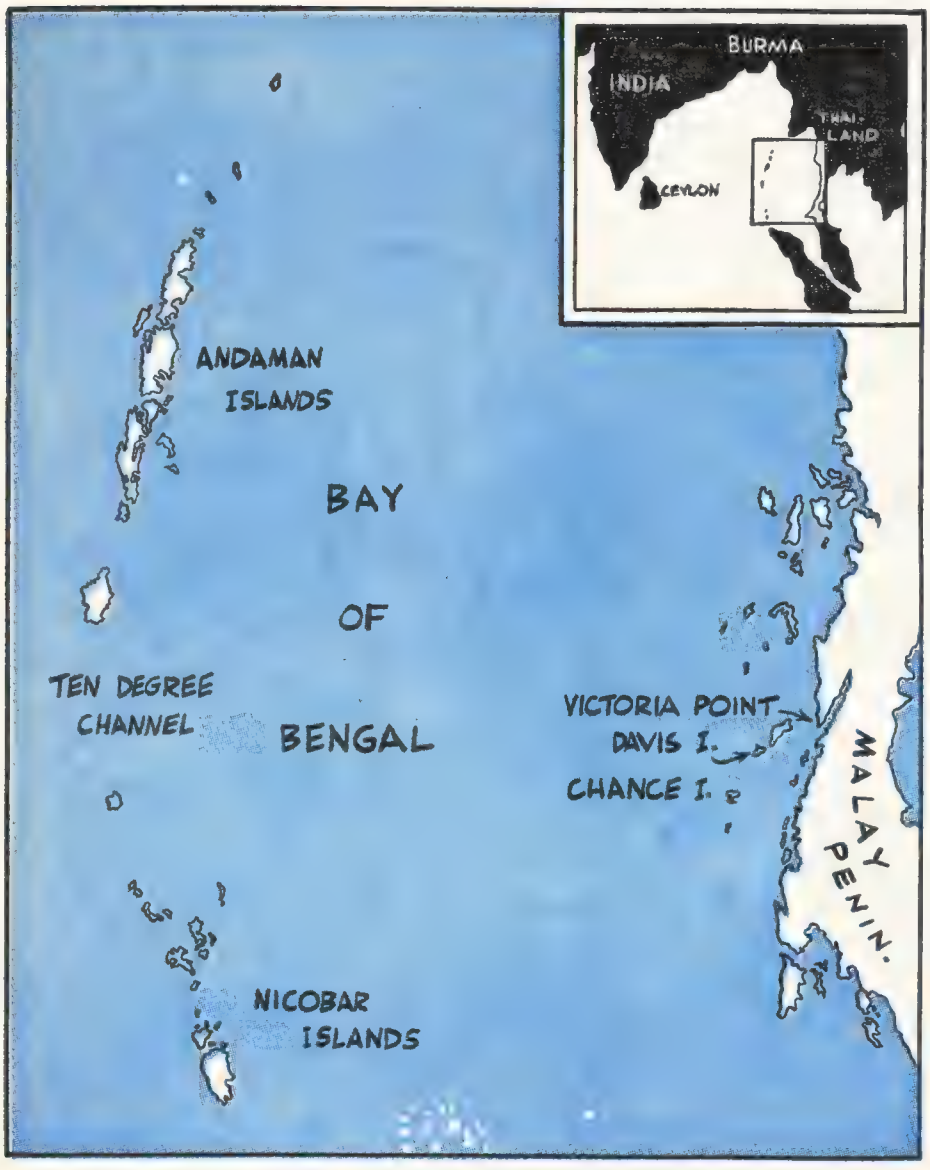
Constant watch was kept that day for the signals, but it was not until late at night that lights were seen flashing from the shore. With Bosun Harlan Lufkin of Hollywood, California, Horrigan made for the beach in the rubber boat with its OSS-developed silent electric motor. The landing party was a sorry sight. Incessant rains and voracious mosquitoes and dense jungle had reduced them to a miserable group with tattered clothing and red-blotched skins. But the reconnaissance had been successful—they reported the island uninhabited, but completely without possibilities for basing small craft. For personnel alone—"rough but secure" was their verdict.

HERE was Horrigan's chance to get a complete survey of the islands in the area. He cabled base for permission to spend a few more days checking, and the next day he and several of his men went ashore on Auriel, a small island near-by.

Reconnaissance of Auriel Island showed that it was unsuitable for small craft but that it would have great utility as a cache base, for which it was later used.

With Black Jack Hoskins' help, Horrigan now devised a bold plan. They needed much more specific information on the area if their later infiltration was to be successful; there was only one way to get it—interrogating natives. The area was filled with native junks ferrying up and down the coast; they would board them and question the native crews.

Next morning they started out submerged, with Horrigan as lookout at the periscope. After about two hours' cruising, he spotted his first quarry—its sails gleaming in the sun about a half-mile away. With a quick order, they headed toward it and then sur-



faced directly behind it. At first sight of them, the deck became a mass of screaming natives. Flash after flash of color hit the ocean as the saronged Thais, like so many frightened monkeys, jumped over the side. Horrigan and Black Jack stood on the deck of the sub, grinning. The jabbering in the water slowly ceased—the natives were discovering that these men meant them no harm. Sheepishly, one by one, they swam back to their boat and clambered aboard.

Boarding the junk, Horrigan and his men began their questioning. When they realized they would be unharmed, the natives were eager to talk; they hated the Japs, and were only too ready to give the Americans any information they possessed.

The junk's papers were a source of valuable information. In the next few days Horrigan accumulated identification papers, native money, sailing instructions and extremely useful data on the Jap supply situation.

There was another job to be done—the sub had a combat patrol mission. Since there was a shortage of available submarines in the theater, Horrigan had to tie in his landing operations with the British Navy's offensive patrols against Japanese shipping, an operation that was anything but OSS business

Their first destination was Koedbia, which was an important Jap port at the tip of Sumatra.

SIZING up the situation through the periscope, Hoskins decided on a bold attack. There was a large Jap freighter tied up at the wharf. Rather than chance a difficult shot with a torpedo, he planned to sink it with his deck gun. He figured that he would be able to outrun the Jap subchasers on the surface, and get out of the harbor after making his kill.

Quietly they crept into the harbor, then surfaced. Seconds later the gun-crew was out of the hatch pumping shells into the freighter, which broke into flame.

The plan was working perfectly, but Black Jack hadn't counted on one additional factor that almost cost him his ship. Jap shore batteries opened up on the sub, their shells coming closer with every salvo.

By this time the sweating gun-crew had fired thirty rounds—twenty-two of which had hit the freighter. It was beginning to sink.

Black Jack's shout was sprinkled with epithets: "Take her down!" And with the shells bursting about them, the sub dived. As they rushed down, Horrigan, hanging to the bulkhead, could hear the boom of the shells breaking directly over them—the shore batteries had finally got their range. A few more seconds and they would have been dead ducks.

At 250 feet they leveled off. Within the sub the men stood quietly at their stations or sprawled on the deck. Above them came the sound of propellers; the subchasers were right over them. The deadly game was about to begin.

They waited tensely, and then with a roar the first depth-charge exploded on the port side.

To Horrigan, hunched against the wall, it sounded as though it had gone off beside him.

"For the next two hours I just sat there. I don't know what I thought about. The charges kept exploding all around us; the subchasers sounded like express trains rushing over a tunnel. The whole sub shuddered. I looked at the other fellows—they looked very white, probably because they knew what this was all about, I figured. This was my first trip on a sub, and for a while I thought it was going to be my last.

"The worst part was that you couldn't do anything. You just had to sit there and wait for it. I kept watching the cork matting above. It began to drop off, piece by piece, with each explosion. I kept thinking to myself: 'When the water starts coming in we'll be finished.' But still the hull held.

"One time I was sure they had got us—there was a terrible roar; the glass in the instrument dials smashed on the floor, and some of the lights flickered out. I just sat there waiting—praying as I knew mighty well all those other guys were, although there wasn't a word spoken. But the hull held.

"It was hot as hell; all air-cooling machinery was cut, and the temperature went over 120. The water was trickling down my back, and my throat was dry. The one thing in the world I wanted was to walk around, but none of us dared move an inch for fear we might make a sound that would give away our position to the Japs.

"There was nothing, absolutely nothing I could do. I don't know now whether those two hours seemed long or short. All I remember is that I saw this book—it was 'A Tree Grows in Brooklyn.' I picked it up and

started to read. At least, I thought then I was reading. I turned two hundred pages, but afterward I didn't have any idea of what I'd read—if I did read!

"The crew had been counting the charges. We had spotted four subchasers in the harbor, the type that usually carried at least eight charges apiece. When I heard the guy next to me whisper *'Thirty!'* I drew my first easy breath. That meant we had a chance—they should run out of charges soon. The count went up to thirty-six; then there was silence. We just sat and waited, hoping against hope. Pretty soon we heard the Jap motors fading—and my Lord, what a moment that was! Everyone just started to grin like fools.

"After a half-hour passed, Black Jack worked his way out of the harbor, just creeping along. He raised the periscope inch by inch. We were all watching him. We knew it was okay when we saw his grin. 'The nearest one's half a mile away. I think the rats have lost us.'"

AFTER that depth-charge attack, the rest of the patrol seemed relatively uneventful to Horrigan. It was the second week in October when he found himself back at base again, his reports ready for Allied headquarters. Since the war had begun, there had been no ground reports for the area, and this first intelligence was received with marked interest by Lord Mountbatten's staff. The campaign in Burma was now pushing ahead slowly against fanatical Jap resistance, and plans were being drawn up at headquarters for a series of bold amphibious operations along the western coast of Burma and Thailand. These operations were to be launched so far from Allied air bases in India that airfields must be set up in the invasion area. Carrier air cover would suffice to start, but land bases were considered essential.

OSS was brought into the picture; and Horrigan, in addition to preparing his permanent landing-party for Chance, was given the job of training two British officers whom he was to take ashore on St. Luke's Island, about forty miles north of Chance. He was to assist them in making a survey of the island's possibilities for the speedy construction of airfields; this reconnaissance would be combined with his mission of infiltrating the OSS group on Chance.

For several weeks Horrigan worked with the two British officers—one from the Air Force and the other from the Royal Engineers. He taught them the rudiments of jungle craft and small-boating through the surf so vital in all landing operations in this theater. They were both of slight build, and Horrigan had some doubts as to how they would take the rugged life of the jungle. They had plenty of guts, however, were highly skilled at their specialties, and very keen for the operation.

As for the American party chosen to command the base at Chance Island —there were Lt. John Calhoun, a redheaded Harvard Law student from Boston; Captain David Blee, a young California lawyer and demolitions expert; and Lt. Cleveland Autry, a big powerful Texan who was the weatherman, but whose real preference was blowing things up.

They were all sound men; their training had been excellent; what was more, Horrigan knew that each of them could be relied upon to furnish the light touch of humor that might save them from a crack-up through those long days and nights that they would have to spend in the jungle. He had seen what months of jungle life could do to a man—the intense heat, relieved occasionally by a very slight breeze which would mean only rain to come—a steaming rain that brought even more mosquitoes; the wet vines and brush, so dense that it might take a man several hours to hack his way even a few yards; the snakes, and rats almost catsize; the ever-present threat of malaria, typhus and septic sores; the endless slime underfoot; and worst of all, the eternal depressing stillness of the jungle itself.

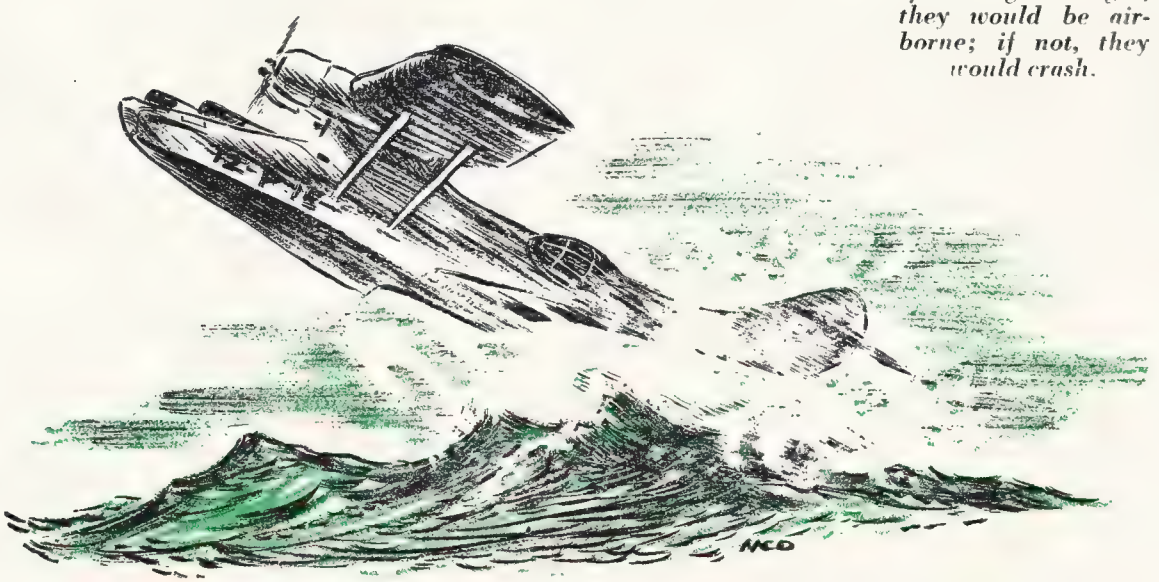
THE first week in November found everything ready. The trip was to be made aboard the H.M.S. *Clyde,* the largest submarine in the British Navy, skippered by a young Britisher whose name, appropriately enough, was Johnny Bull. It was a smooth trip, unmarked by any incident, and within five days they sighted St. Luke's. With Horrigan at his observation post before the periscope, they cautiously circled the island. That the Japs were on St. Luke's they had known. Hastings Harbor on the leeward side was considered the major Jap naval base in this area.

Consequently their landing must be attempted on the seaward side opposite this base if they were to have any chance of success. The island was only an eighth of a mile wide—so even on the opposite side they were within speaking distance of the base.

The tide would be highest at two A.M. He chose to attempt the landing then because the coral reefs which surrounded most of these islands might sink or ground their boat at lower water.

A little after midnight Horrigan stood topside while the men brought

If the engine caught, they would be airborne; if not, they would crash.



They surfaced directly behind the junk. The saronged Thais, like frightened monkeys, jumped over the side.

up the special rubber boat and inflated it with compressed air from the sub, and set it on the casing forward of the conning tower. The two Britishers, Horrigan, and his OSS men, Lt. Coutoupis and Lt. Leo Nover of Montclair, N. J., took their positions. Slowly Johnny Bull eased the sub down and the little party was waterborne on their dangerous mission. If they returned after a successful reconnaissance, the island would be open for what might be a decisive amphibious operation for the Allied forces.

The beach ahead was only a murky outline and as they moved noiselessly toward it Horrigan found himself thinking that their chances were pretty slim. The island was evidently a well-defended Jap base; how many of the enemy were there they did not know—and probably never would. In addition, they would have to be on guard against the natives whose sympathies were an unknown quantity. Orders from headquarters had been explicit: "The Japanese must have no suspicion that we are interested in the area."

This was the paramount principle. They must get the Britishers in unobserved, guide them secretly about the island and get them safely back to the sub.

The utter stillness was sharply broken by a burst of machine-gun bullets. "We stopped paddling and sat there, frozen," Horrigan recalls. "I kept watching through the darkness waiting for something to happen. I wasn't just sure what it would be, but I expected to get a spotlight full in my face any minute. We waited for what seemed to be hours and still nothing happened.

"The Englishman just ahead of me drawled, 'Some chap's cleaning his barrel.' We all knew he was scared as hell, just like the rest of us, but his joke sort of relaxed us. I figured that the Japs couldn't know we were there—if they did they would have illuminated long before and let us have it. So we started in again. I was still kind of shaky and it was a darn' good feeling when the boat hit the beach.

"I jumped out and started up the beach. Somewhere to the right I spotted a stream and we all used it to reach the jungle without leaving footprints. We were lucky—we were in the cover of the jungle within a couple of minutes, and thank God, we found paths.

"We crept along, trying to get in a bit. Everyone was still a little jumpy. I know I kept trying to reassure myself that the Japs just couldn't know we were here—they would never have let us get this far. It was pitch-black. The vines kept tangling around my arms.

"What happened next still puzzles me, but at the time stiffened us all with fright: one minute we were creeping through complete darkness, and the next we were facing a blazing fire less than a hundred yards ahead! We all stopped at the same time. No one dared move or say anything. I knew all the other guys were thinking the same thing—those damn' Japs had led us right into a trap!

"For the moment I couldn't think whether we should try to make it back to the sub or stick it out there and take a chance. Nothing happened for

a few minutes, so I thought, what the hell, we've come this far, we might as well see what's going to happen.

"We set up camp of a sort, and took turns on the watches. At about four A.M. the fire suddenly disappeared. The next morning we looked around for fire traces, but couldn't find a thing—and to this day we don't know what that was.

"On our first look around we spotted three large fishing boats about four hundred yards from us. We kept watching, and pretty soon there were about fifty people busy around the boats, with a fair sprinkling of Jap military men evidently bossing them You can bet we never relaxed a minute during our two days' survey. We looked the island over pretty well—we were lucky, and by keeping careful watch, we didn't run into any Jap trouble.

"The going was rough, though. In some places we had to hack our way through those thick vines inch by inch. The bugs were fierce, and on the second day we all began to show the strain. The constant tension made it doubly hard, and our nerves were pretty shot since we all knew we were working in a beehive of Japs. One false move, and the whole bunch would be at us.

"The Britishers stood up pretty well, but naturally we had had more jungle experience than they, and by the time that we had our stuff all packed and were ready to beat it for the sub, I could see that they were beginning to go under. We got into the boat and shoved off. There was a slight wind but not enough to bother us.

"WE headed out toward the surfline, saw our chance and began to plunge through. Midway a giant comber caught us squarely, tossing the two Britishers into the breakers. They were so exhausted they disappeared immediately. The first thought that flashed into my mind was—'There go our two prize packages!' On the safe return of these experts our whole mission depended. We were all paddling our damnedest to keep the boat headed into the waves, and at the same time trying to spot the poor devils. I saw them when they first came up. We had a tough time trying to reach them, but finally managed to haul them aboard. Both of them were gasping and in pretty bad shape—the older chap collapsed into the bottom of the boat—out like a light.

"By this time, also, the wind had strengthened and the current was much stronger. It was a tight spot. The swells were getting bigger; the *Clyde* was nowhere to be seen. We tried to contact with the walkie-talkie, but no luck. We knew that we would have to keep our position against the current and the wind, and that meant strenuous paddling. For two and a half hours we worked like hell and still no sign of the sub. The walkie-talkie was still out of commission.

"It was almost dawn, and I knew if we didn't locate them soon, I would have to head back to the island and take our chances with the Japs. If we were ever spotted at sea in the daylight, our capture was sure.

"The Britisher in the bottom of the boat began to stir. He sat up groggily. I knew he wouldn't be able to help us with the paddling, so I asked him to keep trying with the walkie-talkie By some miracle it worked immediately. He made contact with the *Clyde*, and it was only a few minutes before we saw the big sub looming up ahead of us. That was the most welcome sight I'd ever seen!"

Next day, as the *Clyde* cruised toward Chance, the men had time to recuperate, and by the time the outline of the island appeared through the periscope, Horrigan was ready for the second phase of his mission.

This time they had no trouble. Their plans were well laid; the five men and the five tons of supplies were landed on Chance without a hitch. As the sub shoved off for Ceylon, Horrigan stretched out full length in his bunk, relaxed for the first time in months. He had completed the first part of his job—a secret base was now in operation on Chance. OSS now had men over one thousand miles behind the Jap lines. For the first time since Pearl Harbor, Jap air and sea movements in that vital Victoria Point area would be known to the Allies. Best of all, to Horrigan, in spite of all the risks and the near-dangers, no lives had been sacrificed. That was a good feeling.

The news that the Chance base was finally in operation was greeted most enthusiastically by headquarters in Ceylon. The Allied ground and air campaign in Burma was now gaining momentum. Should the projected push against the Victoria Point materialize, Mountbatten would now have a lookout right in the Japs' front yard.

To Horrigan and his detachment at Dead Man's Cove fell the responsibility of keeping the island party well manned and supplied. His first task was to train two natives who had been sent up to him from headquarters to act as scouts on Chance.

This was a job he relished. He'd worked with the Thai Legation in Washington before coming overseas, and he'd got to know these small brown-skinned men very well. He respected their high degree of intelligence, was aware that they combined eager minds with a physical dexterity that would make them invaluable as intelligence agents.

He was getting to be quite a yards-goods connoisseur, he thought contentedly, as he stood in the supply depot with a requisition for a hundred yards of "gaudy calico" in his hand. This was their chief stock-in-trade—bright-flowered cottons that would become bribes to the natives in the Chance area. Cloth was scarce in the islands; and it held the same value to the impoverished fishermen of Thai that sugar and coffee had to the starving peoples in the European theater.

The training of the natives was thorough. They must be taught how to secure their intelligence; what to do if, what to do when. . . But the men were quick, and their hatred of the Japs so intense that the period seemed to go by quickly.

HE was to bring them to Chance at the next moon period. By coincidence Calhoun now radioed him from Chance—he had already recruited some native fishermen and set up an intelligence network so fruitful that he was ready to bring back a report to the base. *"Come and get me by Catalina early this coming moon period,"* read the message. So at ten A.M. on the morning of the 23rd of December, Horrigan, with his two scouts, took off from Madras.

They carried some extra-special gear this time—bottles of whisky, sacks of mail and many packages that had recently arrived from the States. This was Christmas—and there was going to be some sort of a celebration for those guys on Chance if Horrigan could manage it!

"This second Catalina trip to Chance had its interesting moments," says Horrigan. "First thing that happened was that going through the Hole we got separated from our escort aircraft, and we had to go the rest of the way alone. We sighted Chance about ten-thirty that night. I was on the lookout for the signals, but there were none to be seen. We began circling—and kept it up for an hour and a half. By that time I was getting a little worried, wondering what in the devil had happened to Calhoun.

"Our fuel supply was dwindling, and the pilot finally told me we had to turn back. That was the one thing I hated to do—give up and leave Calhoun with all the good dope behind. I suggested instead that we risk it and try signaling from the plane. Thank God for those RAF's—they're game any time; I'll say that! This chap said go ahead, and I started blinking with my flash. On the last trip around we caught the proper identification signal blinking up at us from the jungle.

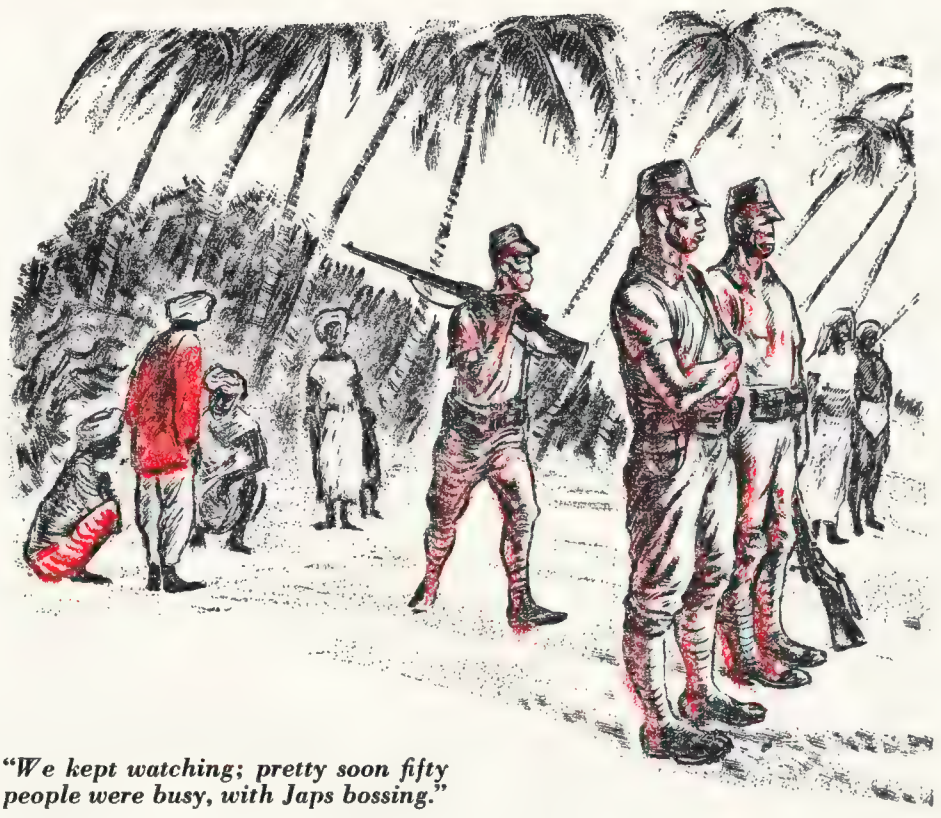
"We wasted no time, set down immediately and the two natives and I paddled in to the shore. What a welcome we got! The whole darn' garri-

son was lined up to meet us—and when they saw what we had with us—well, my shoulders were still sore the next day from the pounding they got!

"We opened one of the bottles pronto and had a Christmas drink—with the sweat pouring down our faces and slapping at mosquitoes as we drank. That was some toast, but I'll always remember it. The mail and Christmas presents made a big hit—no one had expected them.

"Calhoun and I then made a dash back to the plane in the boat. The moon had gone down, and we knew that we'd have to get out of there quick. As it was, we were in a fairly bad fix. That pilot had a job in front of him—getting that big Cat up in the dark. But we were banking on him—he was Squadron Leader Pete McKeand, DFC with bar, one of the best in the theater.

"We started the run slowly. We were going along at about half the speed required for the take-off when suddenly we hit a huge swell. It threw the plane up into the air and shook us all up plenty. The pilot gunned the engines. We just sat there holding our breath. If the motors caught, we'd be airborne; if not, we had seconds to live. I heard the motors cough—then roar. . . . Were we—yes, we were up in the air! When after our return to base, I saw the two full-length furrows in the hull from the shock of that swell, I figured we'd had angels riding with us.



"We kept watching; pretty soon fifty people were busy, with Japs bossing."

"WHEN I took a good look at Calhoun on the deck, I figured he'd had luck too—to get out of there alive. His G.I. fatigues were in rags where the rats had eaten them; his parachute boots were gnawed almost to pieces and the laces completely gone. He had a stubble of beard; his eyes were bloodshot, and he was one pretty picture with his ragged trousers—one eaten off at the knee and the other even shorter. I grabbed a camera to take his picture—one for the books!

"That was some beginning for a Christmas celebration, but celebrate we did. Calhoun and I reached the OSS base at Kandy, Ceylon, just in time for cocktails before Christmas dinner. The party was pretty merry when we blew in, but our unexpected arrival from one thousand miles inside Jap territory turned it into a real celebration.

"They had just about everything—from old-fashioneds made with American bourbon right through to turkey and nuts. But best of all were the real American girls from the OSS office, all dressed up, polish on their nails—the works! They looked better than anything else—and were too."

The day after Christmas, Calhoun and Horrigan reported on developments at Chance to Lord Mountbatten's headquarters. During his first six weeks at the secret base, Calhoun and his party had made an extensive intelligence coverage of the zone and brought back extremely valuable information on enemy activities in this previously unpenetrated area. The high command was tremendously impressed, and elaborate plans were made to exploit the daring OSS establishment to the fullest. For the first time in the entire Southeast Asia campaign, the Allies had regular accurate reports on Jap movements in the Victoria Point area. Probably the most fascinating possibility opened up by the establishment at Chance was the opportunity it offered for a point of contact with the growing Thai underground movement.

This intrigue, among the most extensive in all history, was organized by the Office of Strategic Services with the United States State Department, and was one of the outstanding achievements in secret diplomacy and espionage in World War II. In all this, Chance Island was to play a vital part.

Back in 1942 Horrigan had worked with other OSS officers in the initial development with the Thai legation in Washington. Thai students who were studying in the United States were recruited by OSS to be smuggled into their native land, now completely overrun by the Japs. Their mission was to establish contact with freedom-loving Thais, and assist them in organizing an underground movement against the Japanese. All this was rendered the more difficult because the Japs had forced the Thai government into an alliance, and also extracted a declaration of war against both Great Britain and the United States.

BY December, 1944, when Chance Island, twenty miles off the coast of Thailand, was activated by OSS, the intrigue against the Japanese had increased to nationwide proportions. The Thai premier and hundreds of ranking officials, while officially allied with the Japs, were working closely with OSS in supplying vital military information on the Japanese and preparing their forces for an uprising.

Major difficulty in the exploitation of the secret contacts inside Thailand was the tremendous distances involved (from one thousand to fifteen hundred miles from the nearest Allied bases) and the fact that the Japs completely dominated not only Thailand itself but all approaches to it. Because of this fact, Chance Island represented a tremendous step forward in Allied progress with the Thais.

Early in January, Calhoun returned to Chance by Catalina, bringing with him seven additional men to assist him in his expanded program. It wasn't long before the tiny base became a pretty busy place. Horrigan, whose principal responsibilities were to recruit and train additional personnel and assist Comdr. Pier and other OSS officials in organizing the dangerous trips to service the base, has expressed

the highest praise for the men at the base.

"Those fellows lived under the most trying conditions you can imagine. They were always completely surrounded by strong Jap forces, subjected to constant air and sea patrols, and living in the knowledge that should the enemy discover them, they were practically defenseless, and we back at base one thousand miles away could do nothing to help them.

"They organized an extensive ship-watching network on the surrounding islands, with numerous lookout posts manned both by native scouts and by American personnel. The reports from these activities were immediately relayed to Allied air and naval forces, who carried out numerous successful attacks on Jap shipping.

"Their boldest and most important activity, however, was with the Thai underground. By plane and submarine we delivered Thai agents, arms and supplies to Chance for redelivery to the mainland. A Thai coast-guard launch would then run out from the mainland and pick up the agents and supplies and return to the mainland. At the same time important Thai personages, and pouches with highly important intelligence, would be delivered at Chance to be picked up by our planes or subs. . . . All this went on right under the noses of the Japs."

Radio messages from all over Thailand were also coming to the Chance Island radio for transmission to our base at Ceylon. This was very important, because many of our secret radios in the interior had insufficient range to reach across the Indian Ocean to Ceylon or India.

"Living conditions on these jungle islands were difficult in the extreme. The men were forced to subsist largely on dry rations, with an occasional gift of fresh bread or vegetables from a visiting submarine.

"TO relieve the monotony of daily spying on Japs, some of the boys undertook sabotage operations against near-by enemy installations. One of these nearly cost the lives of Lt. Autry and Private Glenn. This mission was to blow up a fuel and ammunition dump on a Jap island some twenty miles away. Kayaks were used to transport the demolition party to the target. All went well, and the charges were laid with a one-hour delay. But when Autry and Glenn were only a few hundred yards away from the island, the cable that held their kayak together broke and stranded them there when the explosion took place. It took them ten hours of back-breaking paddling to make the rendezvous, which they reached after daylight. When the OSS authorities heard of that episode, they put an end to all further sabotage attempts for fear of compromising the more important uses of the base."

For five months Chance continued to operate with spectacular success. Unbelievably the Japs hadn't caught on to all the activity in the heart of their South East Asiatic defenses. Taking spectacular chances, OSS men were now ranging far and wide to keep Allied headquarters posted on every Jap movement. But at last it happened—they were compromised. Oddly enough, it was one of those small things that seem foolproof, but wasn't—a routine night airdrop of supplies. Two upper chutes were lost in the jungle. Next day the usual Jap air-patrol spotted the chutes, and while the OSS men crouched in the dense green foliage, numerous Jap planes circled the island. Such undue attention meant only one thing—the Japs knew something was happening below. It wouldn't be long before they would send a landing-party to come and investigate.

Calhoun flashed an emergency message to Ceylon.

Receipt of that message shocked headquarters into prompt action. Horrigan and Johnny Bull, skipper of the *Clyde,* were alerted for immediate departure. It was to be the last operational trip for the *Clyde,*

which was battle-worn and weary. Within hours of Calhoun's summons, they were on their way with orders to take off the entire party, and if possible to reconnoiter another island near the shore where another secret base might be set up. The Thai coast-guard launch had been having difficulties making the round trip to Chance because of Jap suspicions and poor engines. Go Kam Look, a tiny island, only a half a mile off the coast, was the alternate choice.

ALL the way out Horrigan worried about his buddies at Chance. Would they get there in time? On noon of the fourth day, while just a few hours from camp, they were forced to crash-dive, when some Jap aircraft spotted them. It was hardly a good omen. They reached Chance about an hour before last light and saw nothing. Half an hour later they surfaced. For fifteen anxious minutes, they scanned the darkened beach, and then, to everyone's immense relief, two kayaks put out from the shore and headed toward them.

When the tiny craft came close aboard, Horrigan, standing on the foredeck, was greeted with a welcome low hail:

"How are you, Horrible, what's been keeping you?"

It was Blee and Autry

Quickly Horrigan learned that the whole party was O.K. As yet the Japs had not made a landing. Their air-patrols, however, were active, but there might still be time to survey Go Kam Look. After briefing Autry with the plan for the pick-up, Horrigan sent him ashore with four other OSS men who were to assist in the departure. Every trace of the island's occupancy must be removed. Blee stayed aboard the sub with his kayak to accompany Horrigan on the reconnaissance of the other island. Less than an hour after they had surfaced, they were on their way with Autry's final admonition: "See you tomorrow night, kid! Don't be late."

It was nearly daylight when they reached Go Kam Look. Horrigan had devised a bold plan for the recce trip. Both he and Blee were as brown as natives and dressed in native sarongs. They would take a chance and circle the island by kayak, making occasional landings, passing themselves off as natives should any Japs come prowling around.

A typical monsoon storm had blown up during the night, accompanied by a driving torrential rain. Getting in to the island was a dangerous enough stunt by itself, but plus that, they had the rough sea left by the monsoon to contend with. It took all their strength and skill to keep the flimsy kayak afloat in the heavy breakers, but the recce was finally completed without mishap or enemy challenge. They found the island completely uninhabited and ideal for setting up a secret personnel station. But it was two rather weather-worn "natives" who were hauled aboard the sub about six P.M.

Johnny Bull had bad news for them. He had damaged his after planes, and the *Clyde* couldn't submerge. The party at Chance was to be ready at midnight. Because of the long runs which had to be made on the surface and the thick Jap air patrol which had spotted them the day before, the skipper was anxious to make a fast getaway.

So it was just barely ten P.M. when they pulled into the tiny harbor at Chance. Horrigan was anxious as he scanned the well-known shores with night glasses. He saw nothing.

As he recalls it today, the next hour ranked for suspense with his ordeal during the depth-charging. "I knew they'd always have a guard on the beach, and was doubly certain there would be one there with the added danger from the Japs. Blee and I talked it over, and we just couldn't understand it.

"Johnny Bull was anxious to finish the job as quickly as possible, and decided to take a chance and blow his tanks. This made a big racket, but still there was no response from the shore. I began to get really worried. Had the Japs picked them up at the last minute after six months of getting away with murder? It seemed too terrible to consider, but how could we account for their silence?

"We had been there for half an hour by now, and were fast getting desperate. I decided to throw all caution to the winds and proceeded to break every rule for making clandestine pick-ups. First I asked the British bosun to sound his pipes. He did, and the shrill notes sounded as if they could be heard all the way to Victoria Point. There was no sign of anything from the shore. Next, six of us went forward to the bow and shouted 'Ahoy!' in unison as loud as we could. The signalmen began to flash their lamps toward the beach. There was no response for another thirty minutes. I was in a complete stew.

"And then finally when it seemed that the deck-gun or a torpedo must be our last resort, we saw a light flickering ashore and someone paddled out to us. It was good old Autry.

"'Where the hell have you been?' I asked. He was all smiles, and in his Texas drawl: 'Well, you see, Horrible, it was like this: we were packing up our gear, and someone discovered a little old jug of rum that had been buried away, so we just decided to celebrate the wind-up of Chance Island.'

"'Didn't you have a guard on the beach, you silly jerk?' I asked him.

"'Sure, but he was one of those natives and told us something all screwed up about a sub in the harbor. We weren't expecting you till later, so we thought he was just talking about the sub that was to come.'

"I relaxed after a particularly bad hour, and we started to get everyone aboard. They were awfully glad to leave, and before long we were pulling away from Chance Island for the last time. It was almost eight months to the day since I had landed my first party there. I felt mighty good to be taking them off, knowing that in spite of all the risks, by some miracle no one had been lost."

THE trip back was uneventful, save for a protracted celebration, which seriously taxed the *Clyde's* rum supply. And as they eased into the dock at Trincomalee, high-ranking officers from the Southeast Asia Command came down to greet the returning heroes: Calhoun, Blee, Autry and Horrigan all received the Legion of Merit for the operations. . . .

Go Kam Look was activated for a few weeks, but the Japs packed in before the long-prepared Thai uprising took place. Chance Island had more than paid off, and had certainly brought victory closer on SEAC.

Asked if he ever wanted to go back to the Adamans again, Horrigan replied: "Well, for the magnificent job Calhoun and his men did there, they ought to rename it for them. As for me, the only reminder I ever want of the place I'm getting right here, where sarongs are obviously in fashion."

"Now I Can Pay Back"

Why a great tenor sang in a stable cellar during the North African campaign.

by ALFRED CAMPBELL

ORDINARILY, I don't like tenors much. Maybe I'd better make that clear; I haven't a thing against guys who sing tenor; it's the voices themselves that get me down. When I hear one of them reaching for the final high note, I clench my fists and break out in a cold sweat, hoping he'll make it. Sometimes he does, and I can relax until the next high one. But more often he slips and goes flat, or takes the easy way out and hits it falsetto. No, I don't care much about tenors.

You see, I used to be one myself. Nature never intended me for tenor rôles, but the University Glee Club was overcrowded with baritones and basses, with gaps in the high-note section. So I stepped into one of those gaps. I think it was there I developed a phobia about B-flat. Whenever I knew one was coming up, my throat would constrict until by the time we reached it, the best I could do was to open my mouth soundlessly and let the other tenors carry the ball.

Don't get me wrong; this isn't going to be an autobiography entitled, "Why I Never Made the Met." I just have to explain how I stand on the whole tenor question right at the start, because this story is about a tenor. I say it's a story, but I may be wrong there. Maybe it isn't even an incident. What I'm trying to do is to tell you about an officer who made me proud to be an American.

Our Colonel used to sing too, but there wasn't anything high about his music; neither the range nor his choice of selections. He would, when he felt in the mood, step up to the piano, open his mouth and give with a hoarse, deep bellow. If he started out in the wrong key, then the pianist could jolly well transpose in a hurry —what was he there for, dammit?

He usually confined his musical orgies to the evening; but bright and early one morning he sent for me and sang a brand-new tune. Where were the unmentionable paper-stock invoices? Didn't I know he had asked for them? Well, then, where the blazing fiery furnace were they? Get them here, right away! There was only one appropriate remark to make, and I made it. "Yes sir," I said politely, and withdrew.

I could have explained, had I felt like it, that I didn't know or care anything about his thrice-unmentionable invoices. I could have told him succinctly just exactly what he could do with all the paper stock in North Africa. I could have proved conclusively that he had mistaken me for some other poor blighter, that my own field of endeavor was as far removed from paper stocks as his own was from designing dainty underthings for Saks-Fifth Avenue. However, one doesn't argue with one's superior officer, even if the superior officer is a great big so-and-so.

In the hallway outside I stopped a Wac who was passing with an armful of correspondence. "Do you, by any miracle of circumstance, happen to know where the paper warehouse is?" She smiled, and once more I could believe that the sun was shining.

"Go down to the street, around the corner, through the garage and down three ramps to the sub-sub-basement." Bless you, little Wac, now I understand why your Uncle Sam sent you over here—to dispense sweetness and light in a dark, dismal world!

No, of course the elevator wasn't fixed yet, I thought as I peered down the dark shaft. It was still stuck between the third and fourth floors, with a gaping hole in the roof where they rescued the lone passenger just in time for him to get his Thanksgiving dinner. He had been caught there for three hours without even a cigarette to mitigate his term of imprisonment in the dark cage. War sure is hell!

Once outside the building, I was tempted to skip the whole business and go down to the Red Cross Club for coffee and doughnuts. The Colonel wasn't at all good at remembering faces; he would just remember that he had told someone to do something. Then someone else would catch merry inferno. But—duty called.

I turned in at the garage and went down the first ramp. Rows and rows of cots, filled with sleeping G.I.'s. I tiptoed past them and down the next ramp. Jeeps and trucks packed solid from one end of the huge room to the other; and from somewhere the faint, nostalgic scent of horses. As I proceeded down the third and last ramp, the stable odor grew stronger; but when I reached the bottom, there wasn't a horse in sight, just roll after roll after huge roll of paper—tons of it. The light was bad, but to the rear of the subterranean cavern I could see dim figures moving about. It was cold, with the dank feeling of a tomb.

What stopped me in my tracks, ears flapping, was a sound I heard; a clear, lilting tenor voice singing *"Si Vous L'Aviez Compris."* Like a sleep-walker I moved forward. The moving figures revealed themselves as Italian prisoners, shifting huge rolls of paper from a stack to a truck. In a far corner a dim light burned above a desk contrived from a packing-case. The singing came from there. And it was true, rich and clear.

I moved forward, still not certain that I wasn't dreaming. An American lieutenant sat at the desk. He was making notes in a ledger, and singing at the same time. The song ended, and he looked up. Seeing me, he got to his feet with a welcoming smile. I felt as though he had just invited me to enter his home.

"VERY sorry I didn't see you come in. Lieutenant Brandt's the name. Glad to see you, sir." He waited expectantly.

I introduced myself. "The Colonel would like to see the paper-stock inventories," I said with some hesitancy.

"Inventories?" He laughed. "I put them on his desk the first thing this morning. He's probably found them by now. I worked on them all last night. I haven't got a typewriter, you see," he apologized, "and I have to do everything longhand."

Then he smiled again, and I found myself smiling back at him. "Here, have a cigarette," he offered, "and do sit down. I hardly ever get anyone to talk to down here." I sat down on a soap-box which he pulled out for me. One of the prisoners came over. *"Scusa, Tenente, io voglio mangiare."* Brandt waved him away smilingly. "They're always hungry—they want to eat every couple of hours. *"Subito,* Tony," he called. *"Gelato y bicchiere di birra!"* The Italian cackled with laughter and went back to the other men. He repeated the Lieutenant's words, and they shouted with wholehearted enjoyment. Then they went on loading the truck.

"I always tell 'em that," said Brandt, grinning: " 'Ice cream and a glass of beer coming right up!' Those are the

two things no one can get in Algiers, and it always gets a laugh. Don't ask me why. But when they laugh, they work better."

"Look, forgive me if I should know," I broke in, "but I can't help asking. Haven't you sung professionally? I heard you when I first came down here, and it was simply swell!"

He laughed. "Well, I've sung in the Metropolitan and in a couple of other companies, but I used to do mostly concert work. I went on one tour of Europe before the last War, and I've been all through South America. And just about everywhere in the States, of course."

"Do you mind my asking you to sing something for me? It's a song I've always liked—'Sylvia.' The last time I heard it was out at Pago-Pago, and I haven't been able to get it out of my head since then. Maybe you don't know it. It isn't exactly opera."

"Sure I know it." And without the least hesitation or embarrassment he began:

Sylvia's hair is like the night,
Clad in glancing starry beams,
Such a face as drifts through dreams,
This is Sylvia to the sight.

The beautiful voice went on, effortlessly. Semi-darkness, the men pausing a moment to listen, the stacks of paper all around, the strong odor of horses, for this must have been a stable once, and the voice clear and true. I guess my own voice was husky when he finished and I thanked him.

"Do come again," he urged as I got up to leave. And I promised.

During the rest of the day I thought a lot about the man. I tried to guess his age—he looked near forty. Why was he only a lieutenant, then? Usually rank goes with age, to a certain extent. Why wasn't he with Special Services, organizing concerts and entertainments for the G.I.'s? Wait a minute, hadn't he mentioned one concert tour just before the *last* War? Why, unless he was a child prodigy, that would make him—well, a lot more than forty, anyhow.

I met him a couple of nights later, at the Officers' Club. He was standing on the outskirts of the crowd that milled about the bar. I nudged him, and he turned, his face lighting up with the same infectious smile. "Look," I said after we had chatted for a moment, "why don't you come back with me to my quarters? It'll take all night to get a drink here, and when you do get it, it's only sour *vino*. I've got a pint of Black and White that a friend on a British trawler gave me. How about it?"

"Let's go," he said, grabbing my arm. "Did you really say Black and White? I haven't had a decent drink for a year."

BACK in the room I got out bottle and glasses, and we sat down. I asked some questions and then let him talk. Most of it was humorous incidents connected with his tours. And he told me some of his struggles when he was trying to get a musical education. And then, quite unconsciously I am sure, he let something slip about "my grandson."

I sat up. "Hey, let's get this straight. How old are you, anyhow?"

He lit a cigarette and looked at me thoughtfully. "I guess I can trust you: I'm fifty-nine. I'm lucky! After Pearl Harbor they wanted men badly, but not old guys like me. 'You'd never get through Basic Training alive,' they told me. No previous war experience; I was laid up with malaria when the First War started, and I lost so much weight that I could never pass a physical. Anyhow, I sent for a copy of my birth-certificate, to have handy, and there's where I got my break. Whoever copied it out made a mistake and cut twenty years off my age.

"Well, I applied again, in another State, and they took me. Basic was tough, all right; but I survived. And I managed to get through OTC by the skin of my teeth. I kept quiet about the singing, because I knew that with that background, I'd end up at a desk job in the States, and I had to get overseas.

"You see, my father came over from the Old Country as an immigrant. We kids all had high-school educations, and we had a nice home. Pop worked hard all his life, but he could give his children a better break than he had ever had, and that's what he wanted.

"America was giving all the time—giving us free schooling, giving us fine parks and museums and art galleries; giving us an opportunity to make whatever we wanted of our lives. The facilities for learning anything were there; all you had to do was use them. When the news came about Pearl Harbor, I thought: 'Now I can pay back a little on my debt to my country.' That's why I had to get in this war, and why I had to come overseas. I can't explain it; I just had to get in the thick of it.

"My wife? She's back of me a hundred per cent. She's got a job in a war plant. Never did any heavy work like that before, but she feels just as I do about America, and she's as happy as I am at the chance to help. We had one son. He was killed at Guadalcanal. His wife works in a war plant, too. The kid is in school, and she finishes her shift in time to get home about when he does."

"But," I said, "what about your voice? Without practice, down in that damp cellar—"

His smile was quiet, assured. "If it goes," he said, "what then? Is it worth more than someone else's leg or arm or eyesight? This job I'm doing, it looks like a routine; and most of it is. But that paper has to get places in a hurry. Some of it will be dropped on the enemy as leaflets urging surrender; some of it will feed the presses of the Underground newspapers. And when that job's done, there'll be another. I'm lucky!" He held up his glass:

"Here's to America!"

Conquered Fear

Just before the landing on Iwo Jima.

by Cpl. Frank J. Schweiss

THERE are some people to whom this will be known. There are others to whom it will appear new. For those who know it, and surely there are many to whom it has happened, and for those new ones, it is something neither will find tiresome.

On a Marine transport going into battle, many men think of fear and death. They think about it, but they do not talk much about it. On the ships going to Iwo Jima it was the same way. Fear is monstrous. Many have it. Each man must get rid of it his own way. He must get rid of it, for if he does not get killed, it is a horrible thing to live with, because he remembers it always, and it makes him miserable.

This is a story of a man who got rid of it, and it is a known story to many, because they have got rid of it the same way.

In the days on board ship going to the island, most of the men read or played cards. Their reading for the most part was from little pocket editions of the world's best literature. Included were novels, short stories,

poems, and enough variety to suit the taste of everyone. There was one particular book of stories a young Marine had which appealed to me. The Marine was a young, intelligent chap who had never been in combat before. He was a rifleman, and he knew well what his job meant. I asked him to pass the book to me next, when he was finished reading it. He agreed; and the days wore on, he finishing the book, and I reading something else in the meantime.

He evidently lingered over the stories, for it was many days later that he gave me the book. In fact, there were few days left before we were to make the landing. In those few days I read some of the stories, but on one page a portion of the text had been cut out. The portion cut out was the philosophy of a man in the story. I wondered if the young Marine had cut it out, and what those lines were. I wondered what had been so important, that he wanted to remember; evidently he wanted to remember it a long time.

He and I did not see each other again in the intervening days of activity. I put the book in my pack for future reading and reference.

Fifty days later, when Iwo Jima was over, and we were on another ship going away from it, I saw him again. It was a pleasant surprise, and we called each other lucky. In the conversation I remembered the book, and asked him about the page that was cut. He was quiet about it. He had cut it, and by way of answer he took from his pocket a soiled wallet, extracted the mutilated page, and passed it to me.

It was a bit from Shakespeare. It had been of immeasurable help to him. It no doubt has been of great help to many men before and since the incident. Here are the lines:

"By my troth, I care not; a man can die but once; we owe God a death, and let it go which way it will, he that dies this year is quit for the next."

The Atom-Smasher

A weird experience with a German charlatan who claimed a great discovery.

by WALTER CLAYPOOLE

A LITTLE over fourteen years before the news of the first atomic bomb exploded on the front pages of the world's press there appeared in several metropolitan papers cable dispatches about a murder in the town of Malchow, Germany. Both the New York *Herald Tribune* and the *Sun* in the issues of May 6, 1931, told how one Frederick Jonas had smashed in the skull of a sixty-six-year-old watchman and had been arrested by the police while attempting to escape from Hamburg in a stolen motor launch. Jonas was tried for the murder and in due course departed this life.

This Jonas was a former plumber who had discovered a much more lucrative occupation than unstopping kitchen sinks. So lucrative indeed had been his new business, and so large its scope, that he had succeeded in collecting a nice little sum for himself and two or three associates in the five years or so prior to the unfortunate incident at Malchow. Interested parties have estimated that this nice little sum totaled close to five million dollars, but this is not confirmed by the F.B.I.

Some more interesting facts about this Jonas trickled out here and there. He appears to have traveled a good deal. In Mexico he cultivated the acquaintance of President Calles and it is rumored that when he left that country he carried with him quite a healthy bankroll. He was the honored guest of Mussolini in Rome in 1929 and 1930. The Duce showered him with honors but it is not on record that Benito parted with any cash.

Jonas himself told with great pride that he was a graduate of the University of Heidelberg, that he was a personal friend and scientific associate of Sir Oliver Lodge, and that he had undertaken important engineering and scientific work in South Africa.

It is not on record when Jonas came to the United States. In conversation with the writer in 1927 he said that he sailed from England on the *Titanic* (April, 1912), but a careful examination of the Cunard books showed no record of any passenger or crew member named Jonas, or any person bearing the name which this gentleman selected for himself later. He was first heard of in California around 1924, but it was three years later that things began to move in earnest.

The publication *Every Evening*, Wilmington, Delaware, printed articles on Sept. 12 and Oct. 27, 1927, about a revolutionary invention on which an eminent scientist, Dr. Walter Hohenau, had been working for many years. The caption of one of these articles was: "FUEL FROM WATER." The reporter was quite beside himself with awe at the astounding fact that Dr. W. Hohenau had discovered the secret which had so far baffled all the great men of science. At last, the atom had been shattered. At last, the great store of energy locked in the atom had been liberated. The world stood on the threshold of a millennium where unlimited power would practically be as free as air. The writer went on to say that the U. S. Navy was particularly interested, naming high ranking officers who had inspected the invention. Also named, was a commander interested in the discovery for the Air Service.

The reporter, almost swooning under the emotions engendered by the terrific news scoop, said that a visit would be made to the inventor's laboratory next Monday by the Secretary of the Franklin Institute, and a professor from the Bartol Research Foundation. He also said that Dr. Hohenau had accepted an invitation to lecture at the Franklin Institute on November 18, 1927, quoting the Secretary as having remarked that: "You cannot shake the gods in the temple without a challenge." This lecture would be followed by another in January, 1928, at which time Sir Oliver Lodge would attend, together with other eminent European physicists.

Yes, Frederick Jonas, the plumber, alias Dr. Walter Hohenau the atom-smasher, had arrived very near the peak of his ambitious career.

A very disturbing note—a very sour note indeed—was injected a little later into the glorious symphony. It was sounded by a critic in an article appearing in the News Edition of *Industrial and Engineering Chemistry* of April 20, 1928, under the caption "CHEAP HYDROGEN?" This critic did not in any way share the enthusiasm of writers in the public press regarding the invention. It appears that he had noticed an announcement in the Wilmington *Evening Journal* of Nov. 18, 1927, that a demonstration of the Hohenau process would be given before the Franklin Institute. Under the urge of a very pardonable skepticism he called up the Secretary, who denied very vigorously that any such invitation had been extended to Hohenau. It developed that all the Secretary had agreed to do was to witness a demonstration if made before

a specially selected body of chemists and physicists. When the press distorted this into a statement that the Institute approved of the project, the engagement was promptly canceled.

The article in *Industrial and Engineering Chemistry* did not mess around with this funny invention. It gave extracts from unsigned and undated pamphlets distributed by the "Hydro Products Corporation," a company capitalized at three million dollars of which Hohenau and his associates held about ninety per cent of the stock. These pamphlets described the invention and predicted that when the process was finally perfected such large organizations as Du Pont would be put out of business. The critic did quite a good job, and it is probable that the fire he lighted under Hohenau had a great deal to do with his later disappearance from these shores. He quoted various opinions expressed by groups who had come into contact with Hohenau recently. By some, the inventor was regarded as a scientist much ahead of his times. By others, as a sincere investigator badly handled by his associates. And by still others he was described in venomous terms as a this-and-that crook.

MY own contact with Hohenau dates from August, 1927, months prior to the illuminating exposé in the publication just referred to. A promoter, or contact man from Houston, approached a big oil company which in this record will be referred to as "Gasoline, Incorporated" with a proposition of an astounding nature! He said that he represented Dr. Walter Hohenau, who had, after practically a lifetime of intensive research, perfected an atom-smashing device by which he could convert into pure hydrogen such diverse materials as water, oxygen, helium, sulphur, and mercury vapor. He said the hydrogen process had already been licensed to a New York syndicate, and that was that. He went on to tell however, that Dr. Hohenau had done a good deal of work in another direction, and that was where some big company manufacturing gasoline came into the picture. He mentioned a competitor of Gasoline, Incorporated, which was teetering on the verge of signing up. However, Dr. Hohenau appeared to be a trifle wary of doing business with the other concern, and if Gasoline, Incorporated, expressed proper interest, he would let the other people slide.

Well, what was the proposition? The directors sat around and listened. The contact man took a deep breath and announced that by an extension of the principle of the hydrogen process Dr. Hohenau could convert crude oil into high grade gasoline at a ridiculously low cost. For fifty thousand dollars he would build a unit capable of producing 680 barrels of gasoline from eight hundred barrels of crude oil in a twenty-four-hour day at a cost of rather less than one hundred dollars for electric power. Think of it! A forty-two-gallon barrel of the best gasoline you ever saw for less than sixteen cents.

Did the executives of Gasoline, Incorporated, listen to the voice of the charmer? You bet they did. They listened because they were businessmen. They listened because they represented the interests of thousands of stockholders. They listened because—although they didn't believe it—because this man had mentioned gasoline at sixteen cents a barrel, and it had such a lovely sound. Of course, this fella Hohenau was a phony. But—suppose he wasn't? Just suppose for the sake of argument, there was a faint chance he was right? Could they afford to take the risk of some competitor getting hold of the process? It made one shiver to think what that would mean to Gasoline, Incorporated, if the thing really did work.

So they listened to the contact man. They gave him their full attention, just sitting there till he was through. Then they told him it all sounded very interesting, but they didn't believe it. However, they would send an engineer down to look the thing over. They intimated that he would probably be wasting time that should be devoted to doing something useful. The contact man was delighted. He would go down himself with the engineer and drive him out to Dr. Hohenau's laboratory, which was located in Delaware.

WELL, the investigator came back, said he had seen all there was to see and he was, very frankly, extremely puzzled. He saw no evidence of fraud. He had studied a report made by some testing laboratory who had been down to the farmhouse with a truckload of apparatus. These people had even cut the power line leading from the highway to the farmhouse and had measured the power consumed. They had measured the amount of hydrogen produced and had tested its quality. Everything seemed O.K. Hohenau's apparatus uses a very small amount of water and turns out pure hydrogen. Hydrogen alone, mind you. No oxygen. What becomes of the oxygen which is combined with hydrogen in water? Very simple. Hohenau claims that he smashes the oxygen atoms. Converts them into hydrogen. And all it costs to produce 480 cubic feet of hydrogen a minute is the amount you pay to keep a bridge lamp burning.

The executives of Gasoline, Incorporated, studied this report. They all agreed it was a phony scheme. It was crazier than perpetual motion. And it was. Look at it this way, they said. He gets all this hydrogen at a microscopic cost. If he uses this hydrogen to run an engine he gets thousands of times more power than he used to make it. And yet—some of these hard-headed businessmen were faintly disturbed by the thought that Hohenau might actually have done the impossible. There was this idea, talked about by the physicists for years, that the atom contained a vast store of energy. Nobody had as yet succeeded in releasing it. Was it possible that Hohenau had done it at last? Listen, one of them said, suppose you had a stick of dynamite and you touched off a detonator near it. A child could set off the detonator by lightly tapping it. The detonator is a sort of a trigger, and it explodes the dynamite producing a violent explosion. By Godfrey, this Hohenau might have something, at that.

SO they sent me down to Delaware to see what I could see. I went to Wilmington one afternoon with the contact man and we registered at a hotel, where we were presently joined by a man who was introduced as Dr. Hohenau's bodyguard. He looked it. The contact man had told me previously about this man. He said he was tough. He said he carried a gun. I was earnestly advised not to try any funny business. He was so emphatic about it that I stopped laughing, and decided from that moment to assume the pose of an investigator who had to take back a faithful report to his employers, but who personally was stricken with awe and admiration at the epoch-making discovery. It was indeed a privilege and an honor to be permitted to witness a private demonstration of the atom-smashing machine. Well, next morning, the bodyguard drove us out to the farmhouse which the inventor had rented to house his apparatus. It proved to be an isolated building about seven miles out of Wilmington.

I had my first talk with Hohenau in the front parlor of the farmhouse and he gave a long account of his early struggles and his many disappointments. He used poor English with a strong German accent. He had an uncanny way of fixing his unblinking eyes as he talked. I got a strong impression that he was dissecting me mentally. I was most respectful to the gentleman. Presently we went into another room where a young fellow rejoicing in the name of Clarence was hard at work making engineering drawings. There were dozens of blueprints scattered around. Hohenau drew my attention to a beautifully made brass casting on the floor.

"That is for a U. S. Navy destroyer" was all he told me about it.

The room beyond was the kitchen. There was a heavy square table on which was the reaction chamber in which, he told me, the atom-smashing process was carried on. The striking feature of this device was a number of large electric magnets fixed around it like the spokes of a wheel. Wires from these magnets went to a complicated device which Hohenau described as a high-frequency generator. It was driven by a high-speed motor. Bolted to the wall near the table was a large control cabinet, crowded with switches and electric meters of various types. Very impressive indeed. At one end of the cabinet a rubber hose was connected to a needle valve. The hose ran across the floor to a cold-water faucet in the back room. I was allowed to remove this hose to satisfy myself that it contained no inner tube through which hydrogen could be secretly passed. The bodyguard himself moved the table a few inches to prove that no secret pipes passed through the legs.

PRESENTLY we had the demonstration. Hohenau moved two levers from point to point. These were special switches and he said he had to move the levers slowly because if he were to apply the power rapidly, the atomic destruction would proceed at such a violent rate that a fearful explosion might result. I was very much impressed. Presently I heard the hissing of gas. The bodyguard applied a match to some jets at the top of the reaction chamber, and big flames of burning hydrogen roared up. While the machine was in operation, I asked a question about the magnets, touching one of them with an iron nail I had concealed in my hand. As I suspected, there was absolutely no attraction. The magnets were merely clever window-dressing. I did not see any obvious evidence of a fake, but I knew for a certainty that a very clever trick was being practiced.

I came back to New York and made my report, which included an opinion as to how the trick was done. I suggested that all shipments of tank hydrogen coming into the Wilmington area should be checked. This was done, but we failed to find any shipment not fully accounted for. I was sent down again, this time accompanied by an outside expert, a well-known authority on electrical matters. On the train I suggested to this expert that he listen rather than talk, because I already had Hohenau's confidence and he would be more likely to talk freely. The idea was—my colleague was just a friend coming along for the ride. The expert agreed that this would be good policy.

The bodyguard drove us from the station; and immediately we found ourselves in the parlor, Hohenau dashed in for a moment and informed me breathlessly that I would have to wait till he had concluded a deal with two Japanese admirals and a member of the Japanese cabinet. My colleague and I were suitably impressed. I did not see anything of these illustrious Japanese gentlemen, and it is my belief that the eminent inventor was in seclusion just resting his feet while his visitors got into the proper frame of mind.

There we sat in the parlor, facing Mrs. Hohenau, whom I had not seen before, and the bodyguard, who soon lapsed into a sullen silence. My colleague, slumped on the small of his back in an easy chair, seemed to be asleep. It was all very depressing. Mrs. Hohenau kept wondering how long it would take the Doctor before he was free to see what I wanted this time. She said she just knew the dinner would be spoiled. A youngish woman joined us after a while. She was the wife of Clarence the draftsman. Every time I said anything she laughed, and I wasn't saying anything funny, at that. She sat on the top of a bureau, swinging her legs and having the best time. My colleague snored gently.

Suddenly the bodyguard shot a question at me: "What are you down here for this time?" I explained in my smoothest, most polite manner that my people couldn't understand my first report. If my second report were not more satisfactory, I would probably be fired. He glared at me. "What do you want to know? You've seen everything you will be allowed to see."

I said: "Would you allow me to turn those four bolts which hold the control cabinet to the wall? I'm quite sure I can do it without disturbing anything."

There was a short silence. My colleague slumbered peacefuly. Then the man said in a steely voice: "No, you can't touch those bolts. And I'll tell you why. Dr. Hohenau has some very bitter enemies who would do anything to learn his secret. They could come here one night with a fake search warrant, tear the apparatus apart and—well, we've fixed up a little surprise to take care of anything like that. Inside the wall, back of the cabinet, are two cans of nitroglycerine with detonators connected up with wiring. If those bolts were disturbed, this house would be blown to bits."

After a pause he inquired silkily whether I still had a desire to tamper with the bolts. I assured him very hastily that I most certainly did not. My colleague gave a very peculiar snort, sat up, and looked around vaguely. Just then Hohenau returned. Mrs. Hohenau again complained bitterly that the dinner would be ruined. I suggested very respectfully that my friend would very much like to see a demonstration. The noted inventor grudgingly consented and we all went into the kitchen. The young girl continued to find the whole proceedings very amusing. Mrs. Hohenau went to see how far ruined the dinner was, while Hohenau and the bodyguard started the apparatus.

EVERYTHING went off perfectly. As the hydrogen flames were roaring, I had an idea. The operating current came from a baseboard socket through an electric cord which trailed across the floor and up to the control cabinet. My plan was to walk to the instrument panel to take a reading, put my right foot on the cord and slip my other foot under it, thus yanking the plug out of the socket. If Hohenau was the eminent scientist he claimed to be, and had really solved the problem of smashing the atom, the process would stop as soon as the current was cut off. But if the whole business were a fake, the flames would go on burning merrily. Before I had taken more than a couple of steps, I remembered what the contact man had told me about the bodyguard and what he would probably do to me. If I had pulled that plug out, I would have openly proved to Hohenau and his man that I knew their process was a fake. Four years later, when I read in the papers what Hohenau had done to that old watchman who, presumably, had done something similar, I was extremely glad I had left that plug alone.

Mrs. Hohenau, appearing from the culinary regions, expressed surprise that we were still there. Hastily I inquired of my colleague if he wanted to ask the Doctor any questions. He wondered whether he might be permitted to remove a certain wire. After deep consideration Hohenau gave his consent. The expert removed the wire, then replaced it, looking carefully at the reading of a radio frequency ammeter as he did so. Then he expressed his complete satisfaction.

The party broke up, and we came away. The last thing we heard was the girl's laughter and Mrs. Hohenau's pungent remarks. My colleague explained to me the object of his simple test and what he had learned as a result. He agreed with me that somewhere on the premises was a pressure cylinder of hydrogen. The valve was operated through gearing and a reversible motor. Just as simple as that. There was no other way it could have been done. One of those four bolts had a hole drilled through it with a tube soldered into the hole and trailing back somewhere to the hidden cylinder of hydrogen.

Action on Okinawa

Drawings and text by
Sgt. John R. McDermott, U.S.M.C.

A platoon of 1st Division Marines are crouching in a shallow ditch on southern Okinawa, waiting for a mortar barrage to lift on the hilltop before them, where the Japs are waiting. All at once the barrage stops; the Marines look at each other, get set, and at a signal start up the slope of the hill, moving rapidly toward the Nips on top . . .

Suddenly, one of them is hit by a burst of Nambu fire. He falls as his buddies sweep on past him, intent on the Japs ahead. . . . He is badly hurt and dazed, and crawls about aimlessly in the mud. Machine-gun bullets are flying all around him now, as the Nips spray the slope. He is very much "all alone" . . .

Then, as from the sidelines at a football game, a corpsman and a stretcher-bearer light out up the hill as fast as they can run, right through the storm of slugs missing them by veritable inches, determined to get the wounded Marine out.

Flattened out in the mud, with the lead whipping overhead and spattering off the rocks in front, the corpsman goes to work on the patient as calmly as if they were in a quiet hospital ward. The wounds bandaged, the three settle down to wait for the machine-gun above to be knocked out, so they can haul their precious cargo out of danger. . . .

After minutes which seem hours, the firing slackens enough to allow them to load the Marine onto the stretcher and begin the careful descent. Halfway to safety, a few more bursts break out from above, but their battle has been won by now. . . . They have snatched another one from under the very noses of the Nips.

This Is the

As told to THOMAS M. JOHNSON by STF. SGT. RODNEY D. PARR

Illustrated by Lt. James Ernst

SO all that beat the Japs was the atom-bomb, was it? Well, that's *their* story, and it lets 'em down easy. But just listen to mine!

A lot of G. I. foot-sloggers crossed the world's greatest ocean by landing on islands, fighting the Japs man to man on their feet, knocking 'em down and dragging 'em out. Then on to the next island; and always nearer to Japan. By sweat and blood, they hacked out jumping-off places close enough for the scientists and bombers to do their stuff.

But that's not all. If there'd been no scientists at all, no atom-bomb, just American infantrymen, their next landing would have been in Japan, and it would have been the last. They'd already proven themselves better, man for man, than the Japs—and Hirohito knew it.

We were all a team—air, sea and land forces. All did their part. But as General Marshall says: "The team's decisive element is the little-advertised, hard-bitten infantry." And I add: "The infantry are the backfield, and the squad carries the ball."

That introduces my story of us—the Doughfeet, the Dogfaces, the Infantrymen. I'm prouder that I've led an infantry squad in combat, than of all my ribbons. When I was inducted, my mother thought I should "get into some nicer work." But I wanted to *fight* this war. And yet, people try to sympathize with me.

"You're in the infantry?" they exclaim. "Why, you poor sucker!"

They think I've got no glamour, a pin-head and flat feet. I have to walk to work in the mud and take the worst beating of any soldier in the Army. And now I'm dated by atoms, robots and rockets.

About that, more later. Right now, I'll gladly admit the infantry's no place for a softie—although it reconditions some softies into real guys. It's for men only—turns 'em out still better men. I'm not sounding off, and I'm no "hero," but ours is a *regular* outfit—the 32nd Infantry Regiment of the 7th Division. I've been with them more than two of my twenty-two years. I've fought Japs 178 days and nights, in the sands of Kwajalein, the jungles of Leyte and the caves of Okinawa. I've learned what the infantry's really like—less footwork than headwork and teamwork—and I wouldn't take a million dollars for the experience.

It began that brilliantly sunny February 1, 1944, when I jumped from an alligator onto Kwajalein's white coral beach. Our squad of twelve didn't line up solid to make a target, like in a Civil War picture. We spread over one hundred or more yards square. I was a scout, trained to look for "dominant terrain features"—meaning high ground. At the first rise, I held my rifle over my head, steady: "Enemy here!"

There were pillboxes, and out popped a Jap with arm raised to throw a grenade at a pal of mine whose back was turned. I still remember that rat's ugly mustached face. I gave him all my M-1's eight shots.

The first thing a Pacific infantryman learned, and the last thing he'll forget, is that with a Jap, day or night, you're never sure and never safe. On Kwajalein, they jabbered, "Banzai!" and charged us from in front. Then some more charged us silently from behind. They'd let us pass 'em, lying hidden by camouflage nets with grass over their faces—only ten feet from our command post. Nights later, others crawled clear back to our supply dumps and artillery positions and threw satchel charges of TNT. They wore American uniforms, stored their ammunition under Red Cross flags, sniped our medics and officers, played dead, or hid under piles of real dead, then crawled out and slaughtered our wounded. They did anything in their book to kill an American.

Mostly, that meant an infantryman; for out there, it was a man-to-man, close-quarters war. So every infantryman learned when to throw away the book, use his Yankee wits, and take no chances. If you found a Jap body that didn't smell, you stuck it with your bayonet. Officers, medics and G.I.'s all dressed alike, and when close to the Nips, called one another not by rank but by first name or nickname. By day you watched for sunlight on shiny Jap bayonets, and sneaker footprints with big toe separate. By night you sat silently listening for their jabbering. You used passwords like *"Lollapaloosa,"* full of *L's* which the Japs pronounce *"W."*

Above all, you learned that no island was really conquered until every Jap on it was dead or surrendered. You patrolled captured ground—including your own rear areas—for weeks. Usually you used teams of three: The first to spot a Jap fired instantly from the hip. That warned the others to fire aimed shots. At night you shot flares to show up sneaking Nips. They hit the ground, but when the flare expired, they got up. Then you caught 'em flat-footed with a mortar shell.

Infantry

The story of the infantryman: his trials, his fighting techniques, and a few of his experiences.

Nips were dumb, but brave—especially when they were doped or saké-d up. I smelled it on some who got within twenty feet of us in a Banzai charge. First time you heard those high, wailing cries and saw those crazy faces rushing closer, your spine wiggled. But that night we picked our shots, and they fell or ran. They often ran if their plan failed. Then at dawn we crawled out and caught what were left, worn out, snoring in foxholes. Once we all made as big a racket as they did, yelling and jawing, then pulled our own Banzai charge. We weren't supposed to, so they went haywire.

JAPS hate the unexpected, and being on their own. Without officers, they ran around in circles where we kept going ahead. That's one reason why we got those islands with losses so much lower. On Kwajalein, banging shells and cracking bullets sounded like all hell, but of our twelve men only one was killed, one wounded. That taught me early that it took plenty Jap shooting to kill one Yank.

I told that to new reinforcements (not "replacements" like in Europe) if they were filled up with rear-area rumors that every infantryman's a glass rabbit in a shooting-gallery, stuck up to be knocked off. We got that out of their heads quick—had new men buddy-up with veterans who passed along their experience.

Any doughboy'd rather be shot than burned up in a tank or plane, but no doughboy need ask to be shot. He could crawl, pick cover, avoid crossroads that enemy artillery had zeroed in, watch for booby-trapped souvenirs and mines. He could stay off the sky-line, spread out, keep his tail down.

He needn't always foot-slog—the infantry regiment has plenty of motor vehicles; but he could ease foot-slogging by washing his feet and socks often. He could use his helmet to heat water in, use it to shave in, carry vegetables he'd picked up, cook in it, sit on it, or even dig foxholes with it. He could dig 'em under cover, scatter fresh dirt, put a shelter half over if it rained, or anyway bail out with a ration can. He learned he shouldn't throw away his entrenching tools or blankets, but keep the one to dig with, the other to pull over his head when he wanted to smoke—if only to stay awake on outpost. You had to stay awake even if you had to whisper to yourself. And keep looking to all sides to know what goes on. The infantry teaches quick thinking. A doughfoot who keeps his head and his nerve can do a lot for himself—and stand a lot.

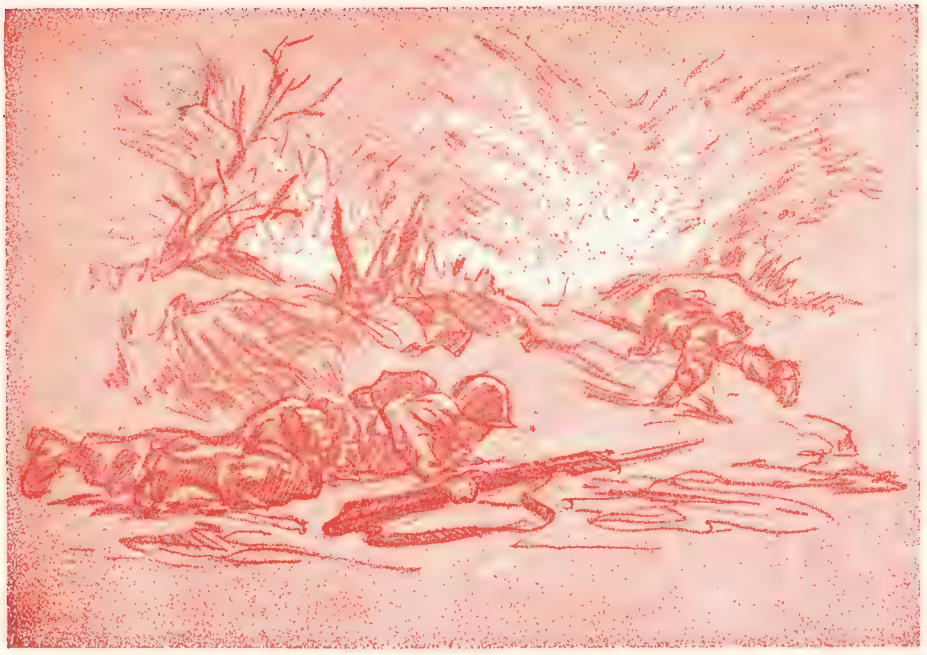
I learned that too, on Kwajalein, in five days and nights of fighting, one hundred per cent alerts, no sleep, cold and rain—swell introduction to our next landing eight months later, on Leyte. At first, in spite of good training, the jungle got us down. It seemed to close in on us—high grass, bamboo and creepers full of weird sounds; rain and blinding fog. Some guys passed out, but not those who used the salt tablets in their jungle kits.

There was atabrine, too, for malaria, and mosquito lotion, water purifier and stuff for jungle rot. Our feet were always wet unless we buttered 'em. Long marches were out—maybe we walked ten minutes, then rested ten.

Clothes aren't important in the jungle. I've worn the same ones sixty-five days. We carried no packs; maybe a sweater rolled into a poncho, plenty of extra socks. Blankets and shelter-halves came from the rear at night. We carried two canteens, and always a knife, to split coconuts or Japs.

Sometimes even knives or machetes were too noisy. In jungle, infantry went maybe a half-mile an hour through heavy growth. Squads barely inched ahead, a man at a time, scouts close enough to talk to squad leaders but seldom doing it. Every infantryman in jungle was a scout anyway. He had to spot Japs covered with leaves and bark up in a tree-crotch. Then if he was an M-1 man, he fired tracer-bullets at them to guide the rest, especially the B.A.R. men, who sprayed the treetops with bursts of bullets.

Those two weapons are God's best gift to the dogface, but hell on Japs. The M-1, the Garand semi-automatic, the best rifle in the world, is so much faster than their bolt-action job that we fired signals with it. You could make all 136 shots you carried good if you kept it clean, aimed at the belt buckle to allow for carrying high, and squeezed, didn't jerk, the trigger. The B.A.R.—Browning automatic rifle—can spurt at the rate of 550 shots a minute in a long burst. But you did that only at worth-while targets. I cleaned one banana grove that way, and later got thirty Japs with nine short bursts. Mostly I fired single shots to save ammunition and gun-barrels.



Then I was a B.A.R. gunner, with an M-1 man to protect me, and a carrier to feed the four hundred rounds of ammunition we toted. Those teams were the backbone of most Pacific infantry squads—they delivered so much fire so fast. Unlike Europe, we stripped off the bipod and flash-hider so we could fire the twenty-one-pound B.A.R. from the shoulder. Same with the still heavier thirty-caliber machine-guns. We took 'em off the tripods and fired 'em like M-1's to flush the Japs off an air-strip we needed quick.

Infantry who fought Nips had to be neither pin-headed nor shovel-footed, but the world's most adaptable, versatile soldiers. There are forty-five different jobs in an infantry regiment, lots of 'em technical, like "armorer artificer." And though the doughboy may "walk to work," he may use snowshoes or skis (the 32nd did on Attu) or ride a truck or a tank, a plane or a glider. A paratrooper's an infantryman—he fights on his feet. So is a Marine.

Besides the M-1 and B.A.R., infantry had about twenty other weapons. There were two machine-guns—light and heavy—for dense fire, also two ditto mortars for lobbing shells over bumps. The dogface had mines or torpedoes to plant before his lines, against enemy infantry or tanks; also the rocket-firing bazooka and new recoil-less cannon that fire 57 and 75 millimeter shells two miles, about as accurately as the M-1. They worked a million on Okinawa.

Up close, the infantrymen used pistol, submachine-gun, light carbine, three types of grenade—hand, rifle, and antitank—and flame-throwers and high-explosive satchel charges. The last word is the bayonet. Once I stuck mine into a sack of rice, and it came out bloody. A Jap sniper was hidden inside!

Their bayonets were longer than our blue-steel ones, but so shiny they were a giveaway. Mostly, their infantry weapons were inferior to ours, except their light mortar and machine-gun, which were good. Our keenest weapon was our foremost spearhead—the infantry squad.

Now, in the book, that's twelve men; the smallest complete combat team. It has three parts: A, B and C—"Able," "Baker," and "Charley." Able is two scouts that go first; Baker's one B.A.R. team of three men; they cover Charley, six men with M-1's who maneuver around the enemy's right or left. The scouts have M-1's too. Or Baker and Charley may take turns advancing. They use "fire and maneuver." While one group fires, the other maneuvers. The assistant squad leader fires rifle grenades over humps or at tanks or vehicles or even machine-gun emplacements. That's how a squad advances, so long as it's got ten or twelve men and all the weapons: rifles, grenades, B.A.R., maybe an extra bazooka, and bayonets. But in combat, with casualties, a squad was what you had—weapons and men. You made 'em do. Every infantryman was taught to fire every weapon.

In the Pacific the squad leader was usually up with or ahead of the scouts. Then came two three-man B.A.R. teams abreast, each followed by three riflemen. All but the two B.A.R. men carried M-1's. They spread in wedge formation. At night usually the squads grouped around the company command post and dug foxholes; one for each two or three men. Gave everyone company, and they took turns sleeping and watching. You might dig slit trenches, string concertina wire and plant booby-traps and mines. Anyway, you were lucky to average three hours sleep a night, and at four A.M. there was one hundred per cent alert—everyone awake, armed, looking out for anything—until dawn.

Then maybe you attacked—usually against a hill or ridge. Okinawa was one ridge after another—and all fortified. To dig the Nips out was a job for infantry—helped by artillery.

I was squad leader—had taken command as pre-arranged when Staff Sergeant Sesmas, a California Spaniard, got hit. I'd been a buck sergeant and assistant squad leader (we seldom use corporals in combat). I was the oldest guy there; mostly they were new reinforcements. I felt funny, but waved my arm and yelled: "Let's go!"

We started down the slope, and from their ridge the Japs socked us with rifles, machine-guns and mortars. We didn't pause like some books say—to be sniped. We just put out across that valley till we reached a spot their artillery had zeroed in, and we had to hit the mud, in a ditch in a cane field with hot hardware falling all around. We were pinned down.

Today this "stand and die" stuff's out—unless there's nothing else to do. Then, like always, the infantry do die. But they don't stand—they lie prone. They can shoot straighter. If you must withdraw, you withdraw—by groups in turn, each covering the oth-

ers by firing at the enemy. If you just run, they'll shoot you in the back—and what infantryman wants that? So, I picked a route, and we went back.

A squad leader thinks first about his men. Before going into action, I saw my eleven men had everything they should have, in good order, like weapons and ammunition and light packs—you don't lug the heavy ones in combat—and nothing they shouldn't, like letters, diaries or maps, that tell something the enemy shouldn't know. One sergeant ate his map so the Japs wouldn't get it. Sergeants especially must be able to read a map. I know one who told his squad one night to cross what on his map looked like a creek. He forgot it was spring, so the creek was a river, and half the squad couldn't swim.

YOU'VE got to know where you're going; if your scouts are new reinforcements, you've got to go yourself and look, though with the squad in normal formation you may be a little ahead of center. There you can see 'em all and reach 'em all with your voice. You can yell: "Jones, do you want your head blown off? Get down!" You can see they don't all shoot at the same target. You can tell your best marksman: "Get that Jap behind that bush!" You can call range or elevation. And you can kinda encourage 'em, smacking 'em on the butt and saying: "Let's sock 'em now!" Or making wise-cracks, like: "Geeze, I forgot my silk pajamas!"

I've known that one to start a squad laughing and calm 'em down. All I need do was to keep cool and repeat my orders and have them repeat theirs, if there was time. When a guy said to me, "Sergeant, I'm scared," I said to him: "So'm I. Let's wet our pants together." I've never yet found a squad that hadn't the guts to go anywhere I had the guts to lead 'em. Why wouldn't I be proud of leading men like that?

Whenever I could, I told 'em the score; maybe I wrote a short squad order, giving information on the enemy, our mission and sector of fire, location of each man, aid station, platoon and company command posts, and of adjoining squads and weapons. A squad should always have flankers out, in touch with squads to the right and left. If it gets separated from its platoon, it joins the nearest unit.

We sneaked out of that Okinawa hellhole because it was one of those places where infantry can't carry the ball alone without coöperation and help from the rest of the team. We got it quickest through the radio-telephone every three-squad platoon has. It was the best way for everyone to tell everyone else what he was doing. If dampness hampered it, there were other ways, down to runners. Artillery observers with each infantry company could also talk to their gunners by signaling with flares or white cloth panels to the little artillery planes that patrol the front lines.

Infantry are taught if they must fire rifles and anti-aircraft guns at planes, to know their own from the enemy's. On Okinawa that wasn't hard—the planes were practically all ours. That gave us doughs a great kick—and little or no bombing or strafing. One particular plane spotted our frontline, then flew over the Japs', close, looking over their location. We knew he had a radio-telephone, too.

Then over our heads went one big *whoosh,* and over there rose a cloud of smoke. Our 105's! There were more whooshes and smoke, and the artillery observer kept telephoning corrections until they landed on the button, all along that Jap ridge. There's no sound sweeter to infantry than their own artillery's shells going over their heads to break up the enemy's housekeeping. You know the gunners are working with you and for you, and you want to yell: "Attaboy! You soften 'em and we'll take 'em!"

It's good to know that, while you can stand on your own feet and fight with your own weapons and win, there are other guys ready to help you. We trusted the 57th, 48th, and 49th Field Artillery Battalions that supported us with 105's, also the 31st with its 155's. The 49th teamed up with our 32nd Infantry like ham and eggs. They could lay a barrage so close to us we had to duck the hot fragments—but better too much protection than too little. We had to have closer artillery support than in Europe, not only because all fighting was closer, but the Japs had dirt-covered pillboxes, and bazooka rockets wouldn't detonate on 'em, like on concrete.

The infantry regiment has its own cannon company of 75's or 105's, mostly to smash sudden counterattacks as ours did on Kwajalein. On self-propelled motor mounts, this "infantillery" came almost to the front line and fired over our heads. So did our tanks. We gave 'em targets through a telephone hanging on the outside, or by arm-signals before their periscopes. And they stuck to us for protection from Japs sneaking in under their blind-spots to throw satchel charges.

Jap throwing a grenade.

In the Pacific no tanks—Jap or American—busted loose on any long end-runs like in Europe.

We showed 'em we could stop their armor with nothing but infantry weapons—God, guts and guns. We crouched in our foxholes and let 'em roll over us. We were dug deep enough so they couldn't crush us. When they'd passed, we hit 'em in the thin-armored backsides or the bogie-wheels with bazookas and rifle grenades. I've seen a line of 'em knocked out that way. Jap tanks were mostly lighter than ours.

Still we posted special guards against tank attack when we finally reached that ridge the 105's softened. When we advanced again, we found only good Japs there. But there are usually live ones around somewhere to counterattack, so all our squads hooked up, and we consolidated quick, checked our losses and ammunition and the routes the enemy must take if he tried a come-back, and dug in across them where there were good fields of fire—open ground. We even cut down grass to make some. Then we sent patrols out toward the next ridge. They snuck along, looking for cover, bushes, ditches, draws. Each man watched out to protect the blind spot of the man ahead and was ready to cover him, and if a Jap appeared in his zone, to yell: "I'll take this guy!" —and do it fast.

Again they ran into heavy, accurate shellfire. The Japs not only had more guns; they had 'em registered on every landmark: villages, crossroads, hills. They were set for us and at their best; with a defense prepared minutely, mostly underground. Okinawa was as full of holes as a cheese: trenches and tunnels with machine-guns popping up and lots of caves.

Some caves were small, some so big you could drive a truck into the entrance. They had water supply, electric light and furniture. The Nips shoved cannon—77's 150's, and anti-aircraft guns—out on tracks, fired 'em, then slid 'em back into the caves. They had outguards with those good light mortars and machine-guns. They were dumb—their tactics were simply to hole up and die—but they were stubborn.

The air force bombed their gun emplacements and cave entrances. The 13th and 50th Combat Engineer Battalions that are always up close, built roads for artillery to come up and shell 'em practically pointblank. Also, the Engineers brought up torpedoes and satchel charges of HE. 91st Chemical Company mortars threw phosphorous and smoke-bombs into the cave entrances. Finally we doughs pushed forward with infantry weapons.

If smoke came out of secret exits or ventilators, we crept up and dropped grenades down on 'em. If there were bulldozers or flame-throwing tanks, they tried cramming earth into 'em or burning 'em out. Same with the main entrances.

But maybe the ground was too rocky or steep—or the Jap fire too hot. Then we infantrymen, fighting on our feet, had to close in and finish it. Machine-guns and B.A.R.'s mowed a way for squads, each led by a flame-thrower or satchel-charge team of two. Covered by the fire of the rest, they crawled in close. The hand-operated flame-throwers shot up to thirty yards; the satchel men, covered each by an M-1 man, heaved their TNT. The explosion would either landslide the cave entrance or stun those inside. We seldom went in, and then with weapons at hip, finger on trigger. Even if a Jap surrendered, it might be a trick, and he'd try to kill you—or himself. I've seen 'em sit on a satchel charge and blow themselves twenty feet into the air.

That's the kind of people we foot-sloggers outfought so the bombers could move into Okinawa, the Marianas and all those other islands near enough to Japan to do their tremendous job. That's why I think our story should be told now—about how much there is to infantry fighting—the toughest kind there is, the trickiest, yet the most elemental.

SURE, we're doughfeet, dogfaces, whatever you want to call us. We're only twenty per cent of the Army, but we got seventy per cent of the casualties—and of the Medals of Honor. That's glamour enough for us. Ask the guys in our outfit: "Didn't you want to get out of the infantry and into some nicer work?" And then duck.

Infantrymen are kinda proud that they can take a worse beating than any soldier—and hand it back. They've got more weapons, and they're tougher. There's no deeper satisfaction and comradeship than among men who've shown they have the guts and wits to fight on their feet, man to man, to take care of themselves, yet to work together—and win out. They needn't fear anything, in war or peace, these infantrymen.

I treasure my souvenirs of that experience: a Good Conduct Medal and the light-blue-and-silver Infantryman's badges: "Expert" for proficiency in training, "Combat" for proficiency in fighting; three battle stars and a beachhead arrow on my Pacific Theater ribbon, and an easy Purple Heart for a shrapnel wound. But maybe before I can take 'em home to Vermont, Illinois, and chase a permanent job, I'll have to help do a temporary one, —by that I mean the disarming and guarding of Japan.

That's another job mainly for infantry. Ever since Noah landed, they've been the only ones who could take and hold ground. New inventions, from warhorse to tank, have seemed to get the foot-sloggers down, but they've always come back. Today everyone's talking about atoms, and robots and rockets, and they sure are wonderful. But people'd better be slow to write off the future, and even slower to forget the past, of the guys who did the elemental, dirty, prodigious, human infighting that had to be done, the guys who knocked 'em down and dragged 'em out—the lousy, stinking, stubborn, indispensable, immortal infantry.

Hacksaw Ridge, Okinawa.

A brief murder mystery by a writer new to these pages.

by EDWARD STEVENSON

Small Secret

"There's nothing to come clean about, Lieutenant," Behrens said wearily. "I didn't kill her!"

"WHY don't you make it easy for yourself and everyone else?" asked Kane. "Why don't you come clean?"

"There's nothing to come clean about, Lieutenant," Behrens said wearily. "I've told you the truth. I didn't kill her. She was dead when I got there."

Kane swore silently. He had been on the case for about four hours and already he was thoroughly sick of it. Damn it, he was tired of having all the Bureau's messy little murders dropped in his lap! He'd rather be out pounding a beat than picking on this poor guy Behrens who sat across the scarred table from him.

"Can't you let me go now?" Behrens pleaded, but it was plain from the tone of his voice that he knew he was asking the impossible. "I've told you everything I know."

A slight, middle-aged man with graying hair, a grayish face and mild blue eyes, he looked exactly what he was: the proprietor of a Washington Heights stationery, newspaper and candy store. Now, after two hours of questioning, he seemed old and shrunken, as if he had undergone a violent dehydration.

"Don't be silly," Kane said; he might have been chiding a child for an unreasonable demand.

He produced a crumpled package of cigarettes, selected one of the least misshapen and lighted it, drawing smoke into his lungs in a long vicious drag. He glanced uneasily at Munger, who sat at his right at the end of the table. Munger hadn't said a word throughout the questioning—he had been content thus far to disapprove in silence—but his intent unblinking eyes never left Behrens' face, and Kane knew he was itching to get at the little man. The short square fingers of his powerful hands drummed noiselessly on the top of the table, a sure sign of rising emotional stress. His ugly rawboned face was impassive, but beneath its tightly drawn flesh muscles quivered like convulsive little snakes. Kane felt the sickening distaste he always experienced when he watched the muss-'em-up lust slowly gather in his partner.

The three men were seated in a bare cheerless room at the rear of the precinct station. Its two dirty barred windows looked out on a brick wall; its green paint was diseased. In one corner of the room stood a water-cooler, its upturned bottle half full of cool-looking bluish water. Directly above the table three light-bulbs shone blearily through a dirty white shade into which empty cigarette packages, chewing-gum wrappers and other odds and ends had been tossed by playful patrolmen.

No one said anything for a time, and although the silence was hardly reassuring, Behrens appeared to gain a momentary confidence.

"I'm not asking anything for myself," he said, addressing Kane. "If I were the only one involved it would not be so bad. But I'm not. There's my wife—how do you think *she'll* feel when she hears I've been arrested?"

"Bad," Kane said. "But you haven't been arrested—yet. We're just asking you some questions."

"If she phones the store and my clerk tells her I was taken away by a couple of detectives—"

"That'll be tough. Very tough."

"Twenty-five years of marriage—and now *this.*"

"I'm married myself. I know how you feel."

"And then there's my daughter. Her wedding's less than two weeks off. What do you think this will do to *her?* And my son, out in the Pacific somewhere with the Marines. My God, Lieutenant, aren't innocent people entitled to a little consideration?"

Kane shook his head. "I'm sorry, Behrens," he said, "sorry as hell. But somebody—I don't say it was you, but I'd want good odds before I'd bet it wasn't—somebody didn't give Mrs. Walker much consideration when they put a bullet in her head."

Behrens groaned despairingly. "If only you would believe me. If only you *could* believe me!"

"If only I could," Kane muttered.

He felt like walking out on the case. Let somebody else crack it—somebody who got a kick out of badgering guys like Behrens. Munger? Sure, Munger could crack it—wide open. Maybe he'd crack Behrens' skull too. But he'd get a confession. Munger was a great boy for getting confessions—one of the best.

"Could I have a drink of water?" Behrens said in a cracked voice.

"Sure," Kane said. "You can have gallons of it—" He watched Behrens start to rise. ("I'm just as bad as Munger," Kane thought. "A dumb cop taking out his spite on a guy that can't fight back!") "—All the water you want," he added, "when you've told us the truth."

Behrens sat down heavily. There was mortal bewilderment in his eyes.

MUNGER got up, walked to the water-cooler, pulled a paper cup from the dispenser and filled it. He drank slowly, with ostentatious relish. *"Ummm!"* he said. *"Ahhh!"* When he returned to the table and sat down again his lips were parted slightly, as if they had been slit with a knife. He might have been smiling.

Kane glared at him. "Subtle," he said. "Subtle as hell."

"Cops aint supposed to be subtle," Munger said harshly. "They're supposed to get confessions."

"Yeah," Kane said. "But not the kind of confessions judges toss out of court."

For a moment the gaze of the two detectives clashed in open hostility. Then Kane's eyes returned to the face of Behrens.

"You sure you don't want to change your story?"

"What is there to change?" Behrens said. "Everything I told you was true. I've been foolish, I'll admit—"

"Very foolish."

"But is it a crime to be foolish?"

"It sometimes leads to crime. Sometimes a guy gets so tangled up he has to commit a crime to get untangled—and then he's more tangled up than ever."

"All of a sudden I saw exactly what she was. . . . Everything before was just acting."

"That's philosophy," Munger said. "Remember it—the philosophy of Aristotle Q. Kane."

Kane ignored his colleague. "Let's start at the beginning again," he said, "and see if we can get it straight."

"I've told the whole story three times," Behrens protested halfheartedly. "What's the use—"

"The mark of an honest man is how many times he can tell a story the same way."

"More philosophy," Munger sneered. "You're really hot today."

Behrens glanced from Kane to Munger apprehensively, as if he realized that the conflict between the two injected an extraneous menace into his already perilous situation. He seemed relieved when Kane refused to be baited.

"You say you first met this Mildred Walker two months ago in your store," Kane said.

"About two months ago."

"You'd never seen her before?"

"Never."

"Go ahead."

"She came into the store one afternoon and bought a box of candy and some stationery. When I wrapped them up she asked me if I'd cash a check."

"How big a check?"

"Twenty-five dollars."

"You cashed the check?"

"Yes."

"Do you usually cash checks for strangers?"

"Not usually. It depends on whether—"

"On whether the stranger happens to be a good-looking woman who gives you the glad eye?"

"That's not true."

"Okay. What *does* it depend on?"

"On whether I think the person is honest."

"And you thought Mrs. Walker was honest?"

"She—she made a very favorable impression?"

"Yeah, I'll bet she did. Then what happened?"

"Later that afternoon Mrs. Walker phoned and said she'd received a notice from her bank saying that a check she had deposited several days before had—well, bounced. She asked me not to deposit her check as there wouldn't be sufficient funds to take care of it. She said if I would call at her apartment she would give me the cash to cover it."

"And you told her you'd call?"

"She had twenty-five dollars of my money."

"Why didn't you tell her to bring the cash to the store?"

Illustrated by Ial Radom

"I—I didn't think of that."

"Look, Behrens, be honest. Weren't you glad to have an excuse to visit her and sort of size her up on her home grounds?"

"I swear—"

"You can swear later. After all, we've seen the woman. Even with a bullet-hole in her head she was a darned good-looking number. You weren't just thinking about your dough when you went to her place, were you?"

"At that time I swear I thought of nothing but the money."

"You didn't get any fancy ideas till later, eh?"

"I never had any—fancy ideas."

"Okay," Kane said with a kind of embittered patience. What the hell, they weren't getting anywhere. Either Behrens was telling the truth or else he had his story down so pat that he wasn't likely to slip up until the going got a lot rougher than it was. "So you went to her apartment?"

"Yes."

"And she gave you the money?"

"Yes. She apologized for causing me all the trouble."

"Didn't it strike you as funny that she'd want to cash a check when she didn't have to—when she already had at least twenty-five bucks in cash on hand?"

"It didn't occur to me, to tell you the truth. Now that you mention it—"

"NEVER mind the post-mortem. What happened next?"

"She asked me to have a drink."

"And you jumped at the chance?"

"I take a drink now and then, although I am not what you'd call a drinking man," Behrens said with a trace of spirit, as if he regarded being suspected of intemperance quite as bad as being accused of murder. "We had two cocktails."

"And while you were having the cocktails, she told you the sad story of her life?"

"I wouldn't say that. We talked back and forth. She happened to mention that she was a widow and that she had a little girl who was away at school. She said she was a stranger in town and was very lonely because she didn't know a soul."

"And you offered to fix that up?"

"I didn't offer to fix it up. She said it was awful not to have anyone that you could even go to the movies with, and without thinking, I said I'd be glad to take her to the movies some time."

"Without thinking," Kane said dryly.

Behrens flushed. "I mean it wasn't anything I planned deliberately."

"It was all perfectly innocent, eh?"

"Yes, it was."

"You didn't go home and tell your wife you were going to take a strange woman to the movies, did you?"

"No, of course not."

"Why not? It was all perfectly innocent, you claim."

"It *was*, I tell you!"

"But still you didn't tell your wife?"

"No. . . . No, I didn't. Oh, I wish to heaven I had! I wish," the little man said with despairing wistfulness, "I could suddenly wake up and find that the last two months were just a bad dream."

Kane mumbled gloomily. It was a dumb stunt for a cop, he guessed, but somehow he couldn't help identifying himself with the poor lugs who were forever getting tangled up with the law; couldn't help wondering how he would feel in their place. God, suppose somebody had to go home and break the news to his Nora that *he* had been pinched for bumping off some gal he'd been playing around with! He got all cold inside, just thinking about it.

"It's always guys like you that get mixed up in dirty deals like this," he said. "Guys who spend their whole lives being decent and respectable, building up good reputations, raising families that they're proud of, maybe never even having so much as a summons for overtime parking against them. And then—*blooie!* They smash everything to pieces. Damn it," he cried angrily, "nothing is innocent that you're scared to tell your wife about!"

"Ah, why don't you cut out the malarkey?" Munger demanded. "All we want this guy to do is admit he killed the dame and tell us what he done with the gun. The little rat is giving us the run-around, and you're helping him."

Kane turned on his partner. His eyes glittered. "Shut up!" he said. The words were not spoken; they were expelled, as if under terrific pressure, in two sharply defined little explosions. For a moment the tension was palpable. A fat fly with

a shining green body and iridescent wings alighted on the table and began to move cautiously toward Munger. As if by some unspoken concurrence the eyes of the three men fastened upon it. Suddenly one of Munger's big hands came down on the table with deadly swiftness. Behrens recoiled as if it were he who had been struck.

"Okay, smart boy," Munger said, absently wiping his hand on his trousers. "Do it your way. When you get through I'll take over."

"When I get through," Kane said, "we'll book this guy or let him go."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah!"

Kane took his battered cigarettes from his pocket, carefully straightened one of them and lighted it. He looked at Behrens. The rancorous exchange had frightened the little man. He was visibly trembling. "One more case like this," Kane resolved, "and I'll quit the Force. So help me, I will. I just wasn't cut out for pushing around guys like this Behrens."

After he had taken a few puffs on his cigarette he resumed:

"When did you first take Mrs. Walker to the movies?"

"About a week later."

"How did you explain your absence to your wife?"

"I didn't have to. I keep the store open till eleven or eleven-thirty. She thought I was there." The admission seemed to send a spasm of pain through him.

"WHAT happened after the movies?" Kane went on.

"We stopped and had a soda. Then I took her home."

"Did you go up to her apartment?"

"No. I left her downstairs in the lobby. She said she'd had a lovely time and hoped we could do it soon again. I told her I would phone her sometime the following week."

"Didn't you kiss her good night?"

"I never kissed her," Behrens said earnestly. "I know you won't believe me, but I never kissed her, never *touched* her."

Munger snorted.

"It's true," Behrens said.

"Yeah," Munger said with heavy sarcasm. "I forgot. You only took her out because she was lonesome."

"Maybe there was more to it than that," Behrens conceded. He was pathetically anxious to be understood. "Maybe I was a little flattered that a nice-looking woman like her would consider going out with me, but believe me, I had no—no designs on her."

"How many times did you go out with her altogether?" Kane asked.

"Five. Four times we went to the movies, and once we just went for a walk up by the Cloisters."

"Where the petters hang out," Munger said.

"I don't know about the petters. We just walked."

"You claim you always left her in the lobby, never went upstairs with her?" said Kane.

"Until that last time, the time we went for a walk."

"How come you went up that time?"

"She asked me to. It was a warm night and she invited me to come up and have a Tom Collins. It was still quite early—not ten o'clock—and I could see no harm in going upstairs for a few minutes. She'd always been so proper and everything, and we were having such a nice talk. She was telling me all about her little girl and I was telling her about the letters I got from my boy in the Pacific and about my girl's wedding."

His voice broke and a couple of tears spilled out of his eyes and ran down his cheeks.

"Oh, my God!" he sobbed. "My God!"

Kane wanted to give him a chance to pull himself together but he didn't dare. Not with Munger sitting there.

"So you went upstairs. Then what happened?"

"I sat in the living-room while she went to the kitchen to make the drinks. There was a funny quiet in the apartment—you know, no sound of the refrigerator being opened or closed, no sound of glasses or bottles—and I began to feel nervous. I was just about to call out, when she came hurrying into the room and threw her arms around me. I was so surprised I hardly noticed that she'd changed her clothes and was wearing a kimono or negligée—whatever you call it. I said, 'Mrs. Walker, what's wrong?' And just then this man came out of the foyer with a camera and flashlight and took our picture."

He looked like a man recalling the lurid details of a nightmare.

"Go on," Kane said.

"I guess I went all to pieces," Behrens said dully. "I suppose I knew what was going on, but somehow I couldn't bring myself to believe that a nice woman like Mrs. Walker could be mixed up in anything shady. I said, 'Who is this man?' He was still standing there, putting away his camera and looking pleased. And she said, 'He's my husband.' 'But you told me he was dead,' I said. She looked at me, sort of smiling. 'He must have been playing 'possum,' she said. And all of a sudden I saw exactly what she was and I knew that everything before was just acting."

"And that's when you decided you'd have to bump her off?" Munger said.

"Cut it out!" Kane snapped. To Behrens he said: "What happened after that?"

"They told me I could have the negative for five thousand dollars. 'Five thousand dollars!' I said. 'Where would *I* get five thousand dollars?' Walker said he didn't care where I got it, so long as I got it. I tried to argue with them, but it was no use. They said they'd give me a week to raise the money. If I didn't produce it by then they would send the photograph to my wife. That's the way it was left."

"You told them you'd get the money?"

"I told them I'd try."

"Did you have five thousand dollars?"

"If you counted war bonds and the money my wife and I had in joint accounts I might have been able to raise it. But I couldn't touch that money."

"Why didn't you come clean to your wife?"

"I couldn't," Behrens said, wincing at the suggestion. "Twenty-five years of marriage and never any trouble—hardly ever even a quarrel—and then suddenly— No, I couldn't do it. Even if she believed my story—and I guess maybe she would have; she'd always trusted me—it would all have been spoiled—completely spoiled."

KANE thought: *Twenty-five years of happiness chucked out the window over one lousy little secret!* It made him sick to his stomach.

"Okay," he said. "Go on."

"I was frantic. The next day I tried to figure out how much I could raise without my wife finding out about it, and it was only a fraction of what the Walkers wanted. I didn't know what to do, where to turn. And so—I did nothing. When Mrs. Walker phoned to find out how I was making out I told her I was sure I could raise the money by the time the week was up."

"She kept checking up on you?"

"She called me every day. And each day she became angrier and more threatening. I think she had an idea I was—well, stalling."

"Go ahead."

"The week was up today. I had a little over a thousand dollars in cash and I had decided to offer them that in full settlement. If they refused I was going to tell them to go to the devil; I was going to face the music. I was in hopes, though, that they wouldn't refuse."

"Keep going."

"Mrs. Walker called the store shortly after I arrived this morning." Behrens' words came slowly now. "She sounded terribly upset, and when I told her I hadn't been able to raise all the money, she practically screamed. 'I don't care how much it is!' she said. 'Get up here with it! The crazy fool has been drinking for two days and he's got an idea I've double-crossed him. You get up here right away!' I told her I couldn't leave the store un-

til my clerk arrived at ten o'clock, and she said, 'For God's sake, get here as soon as you can. This guy is dynamite when he's drunk.'"

"She was talking about her husband?"

"Yes."

"Okay. Go on."

"My clerk didn't arrive until after ten-thirty—you know how help is these days. As soon as he came in, I called a taxi and went to the Walker apartment. It was about eleven when I got there."

"Just eleven, according to the elevator-boy. He said he was listening to his radio at the desk in the lobby and that you arrived just at the eleven-o'clock station-break."

"I guess that's right."

"And then—"

"No one answered when I rang the doorbell of the Walker apartment, so I tried the doorknob. The door wasn't locked and I pushed it open and went into the apartment. 'Anybody home?' I said from the foyer. It didn't seem right to walk in without saying something."

"The polite murderer," Munger sneered.

"Go on," Kane said tensely.

"I walked to the end of the foyer and went into the living-room." Behrens' voice dropped to a hoarse whisper. "She was there on the sofa, dead."

He shivered violently and buried his face in his hands.

"Look at him!" Munger said indignantly, as if he had been offered a personal affront. "Blubbering like a baby! She was dead when he got there, he says. But does he call the elevator-boy, or notify the cops? No! He sits there for over a half hour and then walks out like nothing had happened."

"I was stunned, I tell you," Behrens cried. "I was too stunned to think straight."

"Sure. But not too stunned to take it on the lam. The dame was killed some time between ten-thirty and eleven-thirty—and brother, that puts it right in your lap. You killed her and you know it. Now quit stalling and spill it."

"I didn't kill her!" Behrens almost wailed. "I didn't touch her!"

"How did you know she was dead, then?"

"I felt her pulse, listened to her heart." He shuddered.

"I thought you didn't touch her."

"I meant I didn't touch her—to—to harm her."

"Ah, you dirty liar!" Munger snarled. "I ought to poke you in the snoot."

"If you lay a hand on him," Kane said, his voice desperately restrained, "I'll put lumps on that fat head of yours, so help me!"

"I told her I was sure I could raise the money."

"Try it sometime," Munger taunted.

"Don't tempt me," Kane said.

He felt baffled. He wanted to believe Behrens' story—for somehow he couldn't picture the mild, diffident man as a killer—and yet he'd been around long enough to know that murderous impulses lurked in the strangest people. Even a meek man, threatened with the destruction of everything he held dear, could be goaded into killing. A guy just didn't sit back and let somebody ruin a thing into which he'd poured twenty-five long years of his life.

A uniformed policeman opened the door and beckoned to Kane.

"Call for you, Lieutenant."

"Thanks," Kane said. He got up slowly, gazing first at Behrens, then at Munger. "Take it easy," he added, as if addressing no one in particular. "I'll be right back."

HE followed the policeman to the desk and picked up the phone.

"Kane talking. . . . Yeah, Captain. . . . *What?*" Relief flooded his face. "Holy jumpin' Jupiter, Captain, that's the best news I've heard in years! We weren't getting anywhere up here—completely buffaloed—didn't know what to believe. . . . Yeah, this clinches it, but good. . . . So long, Captain."

He almost ran back to the room where he had left Munger and Behrens. As he flung open the door a jubilant exclamation froze on his lips.

"Watch out!" Munger shouted. "He's got a gun."

Kane could scarcely believe the sight which greeted his eyes. Munger was backed into a corner, his face livid with rage and humiliation. Behrens stood a few feet away, his face white and drawn, a thin trickle of blood running from his bruised lips. He had a gun in his hand and it was aimed at the wide expanse of Munger's chest.

"It's all right, Lieutenant," Behrens said apologetically. "I'm not going to hurt anyone. He grabbed hold of me and began shaking and slapping me. I couldn't stand it. I'm an American citizen, Lieutenant, a law-abiding citizen. He had no right—" He looked at the gun in his hand. His possession of it seemed vaguely to astonish him. "I took his gun, Lieutenant, but I really didn't mean any harm."

"You took— Oh, my God, *no!*" Kane's tension snapped and he began to laugh wildly. "You took *his* gun!"

"I'll give it back to him now," Behrens said humbly.

"Yeah," Kane said, trying to control his mirth. "And you ought to be ashamed of yourself, picking on the poor little detective."

Munger tore the gun out of Behrens' hand, his eyes bright with fury.

"Now, you little rat," he muttered savagely, "you're going to get what's coming to you!"

"Munger!" Kane's voice was like the crack of a whip. "Get the hell out of here before you make a worse fool of yourself. Maybe if you behave yourself I won't tell anybody how a guy half your size took your gun away, but if you touch Mr. Behrens—"

"I'll *Mister* Behrens him!"

"Better not, Munger. It's bad business to muss up an innocent man."

"*Innocent!*" Munger was like a ferocious animal suddenly shackled within claw's-reach of its victim. "What do you mean, *innocent?*"

"I mean innocent!" Kane turned to the little man, who now seemed on the verge of complete emotional exhaustion. "Better sit down, Mr. Behrens, before you fall down."

Behrens collapsed into a chair.

"Lieutenant," he whispered feebly, "do you mean—"

"That was Headquarters that just phoned, Mr. Behrens," Kane said. "A couple of the boys located Mrs. Walker's husband and when they closed on him he blew his brains out. They haven't made any tests yet but they're pretty sure the gun he used on himself was the same one he used on his wife. Anyhow, you're in the clear, and the way things shape up it looks as if we won't have to involve you at all. We'll write it off as a family quarrel—murder and suicide."

Behrens gazed at him blankly. For a few moments the words seemed to mean nothing to him. Then slowly, without a word, he got off the chair and dropped to his knees. With bowed head, he began to pray silently.

Kane watched him with a kind of melancholy embarrassment.

"While you're at it," the detective said gently, "say a prayer for all the other little guys with their little secrets. A lot of them aren't going to be as lucky as you!"

The Nobleman *and the* Ugly

Sir Eric Poynter, Bart., was one of those hard-grained men with a lean face, cropped mustache, steely eye and masculine presence, who have knocked about the world. The type is not rare; usually endowed with a certain charming *savoir faire,* it meets every eye with level challenge which, warming into affability, increases the charm.

Thus I thought as I watched Sir Eric. He had spent some years in Canada and in New York, and was far from insular. He made no secret of the fact that he was now broke. Thanks to the war and the political upsets, he had lost everything except Poynter Hall. He would have lost that if he could, but it was entailed—a liability pinned to his coat-tails, as he put it. Sir Eric looked to be about thirty years old. His laughter was a short, harsh explosion that held no mirth. . . .

The three of us—Gondy, Murchison and I, Bill Carson—were stopping at the Rose & Crown, a picturesque but uncomfortable old tavern in Spalding: and Sir Eric had come to meet us and discuss his proposition. He had done well as a tank-corps officer during the war; but ribbons butter no parsnips.

Pointing to the map spread out on the table, he put his finger on the Wash, that deep coastal indentation between Norfolk and Lincolnshire.

Barmaid

Our treasure-seekers turn their mine-detector on the gold supposed to have been lost from the baggage-train of King John of England—and find more than they'd bargained for.

by H. BEDFORD-JONES

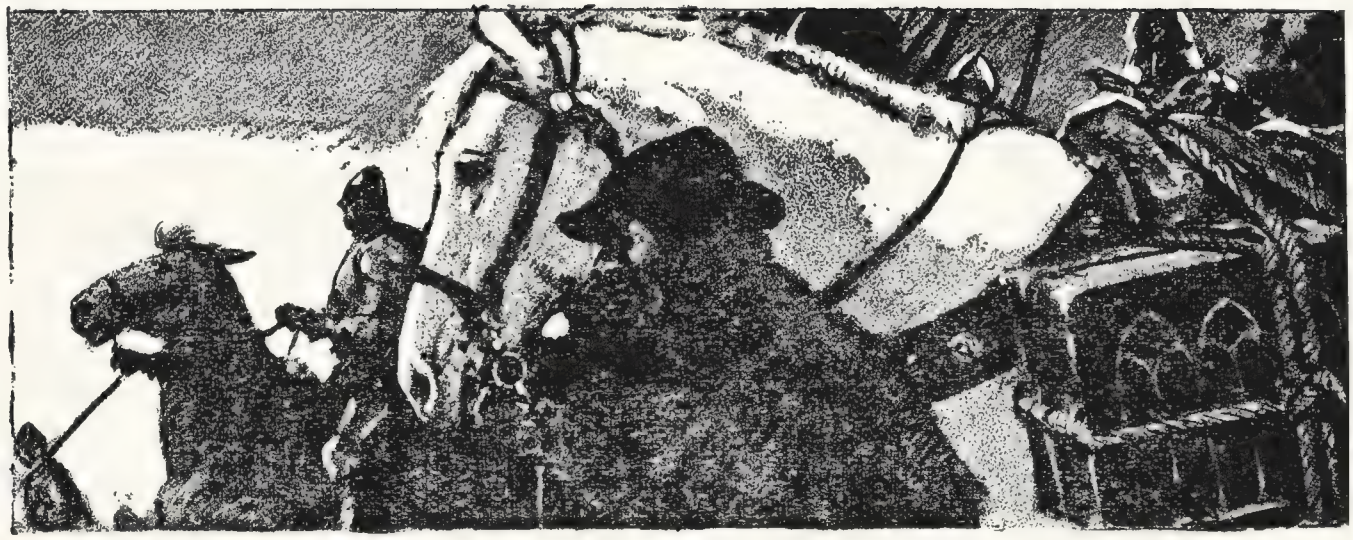
Into it had emptied the rivers of the fen-country before the English marshes were drained.

Spalding was a tiny river-port on the Nane, one of these rivers.

"THE facts," said Sir Eric, "are historic and well verified. In the autumn of 1216, King John started to march across the Wash. He was at war with his barons, as usual, and had with him all the royal treasures, plate and crown jewels. His enormous baggage-train was caught by the rising tide, and overwhelmed at a spot near the present Sutton Bridge, junction of the branch railroad line to Peterboro. Everything was lost. Since then the Wash has been heavily silted up by riverine detritus; the exact spot is now marked by huge sand dunes. Poynter Hall lies three miles from there. From here to Sutton Bridge is fifteen miles. All clear, so far?"

We nodded. A treasure seven centuries old? Nuts, I thought. Gondy fingered his mustache, his handsome aquiline features thoughtful. Murchison, my pal since boyhood days in South Boston, had a flush in his skinny cheeks, and his dark eyes were bright; he was always ready to jump at any plausible story. I was not.

"I have the best of reasons for believing that I can point to the exact spot, within a limited radius, where



"In the autumn of 1216, King John started to march across the

some of that treasure lies," went on Sir Eric. "That's why I communicated with you gentlemen."

"Then why—" I blurted.

He looked at me, shrewdly, amusedly. "If I were positive, perhaps I would, Mr. Carson. First, the area of search is too great for one pair of hands. Second, the thought of prison is a deterrent. I trust you—ah—get the point?"

We did. In doing any treasure-hunting in England, as we well knew, we were taking our lives in our hand. A rigid law, rigidly enforced, is that treasure-trove belongs to the Crown; and whoever ignores this, belongs in jail. There are no outs. England holds the greatest hidden treasure of any country on earth, is well aware of it, and anyone who monkeys with the law is playing with dynamite.

THIS we were doing, in a literal sense. Murchison and I had spent most of the war in English laboratories, evolving various forms of mine-detectors for the Allied forces. The war ended, we were turned loose and took with us one of our electronic pets which was quite useless as a detector of mines, but useful in finding other things. We cut in Gondy, who was a great guy, and went to work unearthing buried treasure. It paid.

Vicomte de Gondy was no scientist, but we liked him, and he earned his share of the loot. He knew everyone in and out of society, and also his way around. We had run into a fine mess with his ex-sister-in-law Félice, which only served to draw us closer together. Here in England, Gondy could promote business for us; it was he who had pulled Sir Eric into the game, or so we supposed at the time. . . .

"This is a ticklish business. We can't afford to fluff it any more than you can," Murchison said, his eyes eager. "Why do you think you know just where to find the stuff?"

"Not so fast!" Sir Eric said pleasantly. "I'd best go into that on the ground, if you decide to have a try at it. I can guarantee that you'll be satisfied. Poynter Hall was built in Tudor days, and apparently none of its owners has spent a farthing on repairs since then. It may be a gem of architecture, but it's a damned beastly residence. Only three or four rooms are habitable. I might put up one of you three chaps; the others had best stop at the Cat & Garters in Walpole, seven miles from the Hall. Sorry; I'm thinking only of your convenience. They know me there, and I can secure you comfortable quarters. I've an old couple at the Hall who do for me; but I'm frank to say you'd not like it. No more would I, if I could live anywhere else. But, with the country going to the dogs as it is—"

His grimace was expressive. He looked at us for our answer. . . .

Sir Eric had no car; he drove a dog-cart and cob, making no secret of his poverty. Nor was Poynter Hall a lordly estate. It was a desolate old ruin off to itself amid sand and pines and Norway spruce. The big trees, like everything else of value on the place, had long since been sold off.

I did not half cotton to Sir Eric, but Murchison looked pleadingly at me, and I read eagerness in Gondy's face, so I nodded.

"Suppose we come over tomorrow, then, to Walpole?"

"Very well," said Sir Eric. "I'll stop there on my way home and arrange for your rooms."

"If they can put me up for the night," said Gondy, "might I go with you?"

"Rather!" Sir Eric brightened. "I'll be glad of your company on the road. Meet all three of you there for lunch tomorrow, eh? And if you don't mind, I'll assuage local curiosity with the story that Americans may lease the place and are looking at it with repairs in mind. Likely story, and all that."

He clattered away, and Gondy went with him; Murchison and I knew the reason. Gondy wanted a chance to buzz about on his own. He had a positive genius for learning things; people talked to him freely, and he could pick up more information in an hour than others could in a week's time.

"You don't seem so hot about this venture," Murchison said to me later.

"I smell a rat," I told him. "Our busted nobleman didn't ring true in his talk about the risks. There's no law against hunting for treasure; concealing it is the joker. We're steering close to the wind, sure, which lends it spice; but I wouldn't trust this guy any farther than I can spit."

He scoffed. "We can handle him if there's any trouble. All that would make me lose sleep, would be if Félice were in the picture. She's not."

"No; that's a relief," I admitted. "The detectives Gondy put on her trail have lost track of her; in Paris, at last reports. I know there's no ground for any suspicion with Sir Eric; I just don't fancy his type, that's all."

WITH morning, we ambled to Walpole, in our ancient but honorable Fiat. In the back end, disassembled for travel, was the gadget we called the Baby. It was no discovery of epochal proportions. Indeed, it was no discovery at all, being merely an adaptation of electronic principles, used in radar and elsewhere, to our present aims. For that matter, every modern steamship takes soundings precisely as we plumbed old Mother Earth for treasure, except that we had harnessed supersonic waves of incredible delicacy, and further split them up to suit our purposes. The tubes were the unique controlling feature. These we had made ourselves, and their secret was ours alone; without them, the Baby was nothing at all.

About mid-morning we reached Walpole, or Long Walpole as it was

Wash. He had with him all the royal treasures and crown jewels."

locally called for some unknown reason, and readily located the Cat & Garters. This was a better tavern than the Rose & Crown, boasting flush toilets instead of the usual British thundermugs. Sir Eric had been as good as his word, and we took possession of two excellent rooms equipped with feather-beds and bell-pulls and tiny fireplaces.

Gondy was on hand to meet us.

I WENT around the car to unlock the back end and get the bags, and made an unpleasant discovery: the lock was an intricate Italian one, and somebody had been at it, completely ruining it for further use. It looked and shut all right, but would never lock again. However, nothing had been stolen. The job must have been done at Spalding, we figured out, but there was nothing to show who had done it.

"We've an hour before Sir Eric shows up," Gondy said. "Let's settle down in the bar, and I'll show you Exhibit A. Which of us, by the way, stops at Poynter Hall?"

"Let's toss coins for it," I suggested. "Odd man gets the bad luck."

We took a table in the ordinary room, ordered drinks and made the toss. I was the odd man. Gondy chuckled.

"What do you think of the barmaid?" he asked softly. "Observe her well."

We did so. She was rosy-cheeked, heavy-browed, had a big mouth and buxom fittings; she could not be called handsome, certainly, but she was extremely neat in hair and person. I noted that the barflies treated her with great respect.

"A pippin," said Murchison carelessly. "Smart gal, I'd say. Not so young."

"Ugly as sin with a heart of gold," I commented. "I like her looks. Who is she, Gondy?"

Gondy grinned and loosed his bomb.

"Lady Poynter," said he.

We looked at him hard. "Come on, no kidding," I said.

He shook his head. "Fact—or so I'm led to conclude. There's a good old word that seems to fit our Eric; *raffish*. He's been a bit of a blade in his day. The general social upset due to the war did not help matters. This barmaid, Rose, owns the whole place. Her father was killed in the Dunkirk débacle, her brother was torpedoed, and she inherited. It is supposed that Sir Eric married her, during the war, secretly. . . . Merely gossip. He would not dare acknowledge her as his wife, here in England. But when he comes, just watch them—their faces!"

"I'd put her down as a damned exceptional woman," I said. "So Eric's a cad?"

"No, no, I don't mean that," Gondy said hurriedly. "A gambler, a heavy plunger always, perhaps a potential rascal—but so far, he's kept up his end of respectability, socially speaking. He's no crook, if you get me; but I fancy he's amoral, like many a better man—unscrupulous. We'll do well to keep an eye on him if we find anything."

"What else have you swept up from backstairs gossip?" I inquired. That hurt him; and it was an unfair thrust. I said so and apologized, and next minute he was grinning again. He began to bubble over, in his eager way:

"There's no question about the loss of the treasure, of course. That's history, and the exact spot was long ago worked out. It seems, however, that shifting sands and scouring tides might have carried it anywhere; no use looking for it where the loss happened, any more than you could look for Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea. As for Poynter Hall, it was built long after King John's day, of course. There are local traditions about treasure in connection with the place—not King John's gold, just treasure. All very vague, but Sir Eric may have something definite to go on. Local tradition is often surprisingly right."

He gulped his drink and hurried along.

"Now comes trouble: Eric is heavily in debt, of course. And lately he's been paying some attention to another lady—"

"Wait!" said Murchison. "You just intimated that he's in love with his supposed wife, yonder!"

Gondy nodded. "Or she's in love with him. What he means by love, is something else again—that sort of man loves anything in skirts. Anyhow, there's another woman in the picture; no one knows just who she is, which makes the gossip keener. I'm just giving you general gossip, by way of getting you *au courant* with the situation," he added apologetically, for as a rule he detested such loose talk. "It's vitally important that we know everything possible about our man."

We were still chatting when the tall form of Sir Eric entered. I looked at his fine athletic figure with envy, for I am heavily built, and since my discharge had paid scant attention to diet. He joined us with a hearty greeting. Rose came over to our table, and we arranged about something to eat. I saw what Gondy meant, when Rose looked at him: she had the look a woman wears only for the man who means the whole world to her.

BUT I saw, or fancied, something else—a vivid but concealed resentment. This woman had character plus. She was keenly intelligent and had a pride all her own. Within her somewhat ungainly shell she had everything that was lacking beneath Sir Eric's superficial show of gentility. I liked her quiet poise and innate dignity. She was worth a dozen of him.

Sir Eric had walked over from the Hall; a few miles were nothing to him, of course. Some of these chaps in Eng-

land walk twenty or thirty miles a day and like it. When he found I was to be his guest, he shook hands, commiserated with me, and enjoyed a cheery laugh. He excused us to have a wash, before luncheon; perhaps it was coincidence, but Rose was gone at the same time, another barmaid taking her place. . . . . None of our business, of course.

The meal ended, we all piled into the Fiat, which Murchison and Gondy would keep; and Sir Eric directed us on our way. He took us by a roundabout route, in order to point out how the topography along this side of the Wash had been altered by the river-silt that had built it up in the old days, when this district of England was all marshland, and tides flowed in where now lay solid ground. Murchison was the first to get what he was driving at.

"Oh, I see! You mean anything here would have been carried along to that grove of beeches you were talking about!"

"Precisely. It was like a weir along the shore then. Men, animals, anything washed away back yonder, would

be caught and held and—sunk. Now, when Poynter Hall was built in the Tudor days, it stood among huge beeches, then on solid ground. I've some of the family papers to prove this," Sir Eric replied. "There's the Hall ahead. The beeches vanished centuries ago and were replaced by pines, of which even the largest are gone now."

We turned at a ruined gateway to a neglected drive and unkempt grounds covered with pine and spruce saplings, and came to the dilapidated and overgrown Hall. Most of it was roofless desolation; one small wing, with a portion of the nearby stables, was sound and habitable, though by no means inviting. "Much patched about," as our host said truly.

Giles and Bradshaw stood waiting to receive us. Male and female created He them, and I have seldom seen less inviting specimens of the creation. Giles was a tottering old boy with a straggly gray thatch and a cleft palate; not a word that he said did I ever comprehend. Bradshaw was, by dress, a female; equally old, her chin nearly met her nose, and both sprouted an abundance of gray hairs. They were the Hall servitors. Giles could not handle my suitcase; he had all he could do to get about, so I hefted it into the house.

Inside we found five huddled little rooms—two bedrooms, small, with broken window-panes, parlor, dining-room and what the English call offices; in this case a kitchen, the best room in the house. The bed in my room caused me a sigh at thought of entrusting my two-hundred-twenty pounds to its mercies, but Sir Eric shepherded us outside in no time.

"NOW let us look at the best thing about the place, and you'll comprehend my optimism," he said cheerfully, and led us around to the side away from the drive. No doubt a stairway had once been there. Now it was just a hole in the ruined walls,

with a ramp leading down to the cellars.

But what cellars they were! The plural was used with justice here. Except for one end heaped with rubble and branching forth saplings to the sky, they ran under the whole place. The ceiling and floor above was upheld by massive stone pillars three feet thick. Underfoot was beaten earth. Wreckage of old winebins, broken furniture, junk of all kinds, strewed the place. A flashlight provided the only illumination, even in mid-afternoon. The ceiling was a good eight feet high.

"Among the title deeds and other estate papers," said Sir Eric, "is an account of the building of the Hall. The foundations were put in down through sand to a solid clay substratum, and somewhere in the course of the work, trouble was encountered. Bones of men and horses were dug up; the workmen sickened, some of them died; superstitious fancies were wakened. One man declared that he saw the devil in person grinning out of the hole; another related that he uncovered several great chests, and that gibbering ghosts pulled the earth back on top of his discovery. This man was among those who died.

"Whatever the truth may be, undoubtedly something was discovered of a nature that caused much terror; in panic, the excavation was abandoned and the foundations were put down as they now are. The legend was started that a curse lay on the spot. You'll still hear told that the Hall is haunted."

HE traced what he considered a logical connection between these happenings and the beechwood that had stood here in previous centuries, trapping and burying anything swept down this bank of the Wash. What was more to the point, he took us upstairs to the parlor and opened a cupboard to display a number of objects that had been dug up by the builders and preserved—sadly rusted remnants of weapons, and bits of iron, which archæologists had identified as being of Angevin types—that is, of King John's day. The iron fragments were what he called "horse furniture."

He was deadly serious about it all, the conclusion being that part at least of King John's treasure was to be found under the cellar floor. Where treasure was concerned, Murchison would believe anything, and became quite lit up over the possibilities. Gondy, too, was all for it, being equally flighty in his imagination.

I said nothing. When a man is obsessed with a fixed idea, sane talk is wasted time. My old lab chief was the ultimate whiz on electronics, but he had a firm belief that the whole English language would have to be rewritten and based on the hep-cat jargon of pre-war days, and would argue you black in the face if you objected. Same with Sir Eric. This delusion of his was arrant nonsense, of course, but I figured it would not take us long to explore these cellars—and we might always find something or other. That is one nice thing about treasure-hunting in England: you're almost sure to turn up something.

He talked for a solid hour about his belief without saying anything new, then dug out a couple of old lanterns and took them down the hole, while we got the Baby unpacked and put together. This gadget of ours was very light, being made of a magnesium alloy. We had mounted it in a wicker baby-buggy, which held the batteries compactly and covered ground with ease. Like a radio, it should ideally have been hooked up to a 110-volt current, but that was out of the question here, and the batteries would do the work.

The north end of the cellars was the point toward the Wash, whose waters now ran at a considerable distance from the Hall. We began there, working for an hour just to get in running order and let Sir Eric see how the Baby strutted its stuff. He refused to believe it. He could quite comprehend that the rays, or waves, would kick back from any solid substance they encountered, and would register on the dials; but that we could tell the depth and nature of that substance was too stiff for him.

The earthen floor presented no difficulty, of course. There was little junk in the north cellar, and for twenty minutes we worked nicely, until the buzzer sounded. I consulted the chart, on which we had mapped all combinations of the dials and gauges, and which gave us at a glance the nature of any strike.

"Wood, four feet down," I said. "Apparently a stump, not a log."

Sir Eric went off and came back with a pick and shovel, took off his coat, and buckled down to hard work in spite of our attempts to dissuade him. It was a job, for the floor was solidly packed down, but at length he reached his objective. Sure enough, it was an old stump, and a big one—beech, he thought. While I filled in the hole, he rested. We knocked off and went up into the fading afternoon daylight.

"Wonderful!" cried Sir Eric. "What did I tell you about the beechwood? This proves it. How deep does the bally thing probe?"

We had adjusted it to a depth of fifteen feet, which was plenty. We were not anxious to sweat digging up relics of the flood. Having thoughtfully fetched along a bottle of Scotch, we laid out the campaign. I was to stay here and work when the spirit moved me; Murchison and Gondy would return to the Cat & Garters, and come back in the morning, bringing a lunch hamper, to put in the full day. It was impossible, said Sir Eric, to get anyone except Giles to do any digging; no one else could be trusted. Giles being what he was, we voted him out and made up our minds to pick-and-shovel work.

My pals got off. Sir Eric and I bathed in the good old English fashion—little tin tub and sponge—and dined. It was a good dinner of roast pheasant; if old Giles could trap birds, Bradshaw could certainly cook them to the king's taste. After dinner, my host said he was going for a walk, and would I come along? I declined, and fancied that he looked a shade relieved. He told me to make myself at home, and went striding away.

I pottered around the sad mess of a house, inspected the cob and dog-cart in the unruined corner of the stables, above which the two servants lived, and finally turned in, disgusted with the whole business. The Baby was safe in the cellar.

WE put in two cheerless days of wearying labor. Sir Eric did his share, but each afternoon he borrowed the car and went off on his own errands. But on Saturday morning we turned up a slab of stone and he insisted on going after it. Eight feet down, it was. Instead of a slab, we found it to be a stone chest containing the bones of an ancient British warrior, with some bronze implements, and a sword and pottery. Magnificent, said Sir Eric; we did not agree. Filling in on top of that chest was a job in itself. I got it done after lunch; he went off in the car, and I sat outside smoking and resting before taking my trick at the Baby. I walked down to the gate to stretch my legs, and was just in time to get all but run over by one of these miniature British cars as it swung in from the road.

The thing swerved to avoid hitting me—I had already jumped clear—and slammed into a sapling and stopped. The shock threw the driver forward; she hit her head against the wheel and slumped over it, knocked silly, but not before I had recognized Rose, the ugly barmaid.

I ran to her and pulled her out from under the wheel, letting her down flat on the ground. In repose, her features were equally resolute but more pleasant; they had a rather charming freshness and youth. She wore little make-up, was neat and trim as a pin, and I was surprised by her hands—long and slender, beautifully formed, though roughened by her daily work. A red mark on her forehead was rapidly becoming a bump.

The truest kindness was to let her come around by herself, so I did. In getting her out of the car, I had dis-

lodged some papers and letters lying on the seat. Those I picked up and replaced, then sat beside her, lit a fresh cigarette, and waited. No rings were on either hand; the one lying by me had a beautiful and costly watch, set with brilliants, on the wrist. It was her only ornament.

My cigarette was half finished when she sighed, stirred, and opened her eyes.

"Don't move," I advised her quietly. "You're all right now; relax and rest. You hit your head against the wheel, and it knocked you out."

She lay looking at me; I had pillowed her head on my coat.

"I know you," she said calmly. "You're one of Sir Eric's friends—the Americans."

"Two Americans, one Frenchman," I said. "Yes. You're Rose; I know. How did that inn ever get its queer title of the Cat & Garters?"

"It's been that for ever so long." Her tongue held no trace of country brogue. She had education, obviously. "A gentleman from London said once that it must have been a French name originally—meaning the Four Carters, he thought. . . . French!" A shadow crossed her face. "There's no good bodes to us from anything French—anything! Naught but ill. That reminds me—I came to see Sir Eric."

I failed to get her association of ideas. "He's not here, so relax," I said. "He borrowed our car and went out, I don't know where."

"But I can guess," she said bitterly. She kept watching me steadily. "You are Mr. Carson. Your friends at the inn have spoken of you. Is there no one else here at the Hall?"

"You mean visitors? No."

She sat up. "I'm all right; I'd better be going. Tell him, if you will, that I came over to see him in regard to Denemere; he'll understand."

I helped her up, then got the little car into the road for her, and she twisted herself under the wheel. As I closed the door, she showed a trace of the usual brusque independence of the average Englishwoman.

"Sorry I was such a rotten driver and made myself a nuisance." She gave me a sudden flashing smile. "I wish I could help you, really; but I don't know just what to warn you against. You will keep your eyes open, won't you? Good-by."

She sent the car away fast, leaving me astonished. Warn me? That was an odd thing to say. I turned, and then saw a paper on the ground where the car had stood—one of her papers, no doubt, that had slid under the car in falling. I picked it up, saw that it was simply a folded sheet bearing writing, and pocketed it. Regaining the house, I put it on the dresser in my room, intending to send it back to her by Murchison and Gondy. Then I went back down cellar—and what I found there put everything else out of mind.

Murch was hacking away with the pick; Gondy was shoveling; and both were in high excitement. Metal at four feet down—solid metal, six feet long and four wide—might be an enormous chest of some kind! As usual, I bit. Their fever infected me, and I got busy with the pick; and sure enough, the Baby had told the truth. What we brought to light was a huge sheet of lead, part of the original roof-covering which had been stripped off. We left one corner bare for our host to see, and I took my spell at the machine while Gondy and Murchison went topside to clean up and rest.

Working down in that gloomy vault by flickering lantern-light was depressing; it was a ghostly and rather ominous place and in time got on the nerves. I plugged along for quite a while, and felt thankful that we had covered most of the north cellar. When the buzzer sounded, I jumped; it was like getting a big strike after trolling idly for an hour.

Another sheet of lead, I thought, and flashed my light on the dials. No! To my surprise, the gauges did not hold steady but flickered. Apparently something had been struck at a depth of ten feet. I was consulting the chart, trying to find the nature of the object, when Murchison and Gondy returned.

"That's an extraordinary thing!" cried out Murch. "Where on earth did you get it?"

"What are you talking about?" I demanded.

"That letter or message on your dresser. Haven't you read it?"

"Certainly not," I began.

Gondy cut me short. He was waving the folded paper.

"Then listen to this, Bill!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Looks as though some anonymous friend were tipping somebody off!" He read over the writing:

"For your own good, you had better know that E. P. spends part of each day with the foreign lady at Denemere; they do seem most intimate."

Denemere! I remembered all of a sudden what Rose had said.

"You two chumps are reading a lady's private correspondence," I said. "Forgot to tell you about Rose."

I RELATED what had happened, and how I came to have the letter. It was plain that somebody was trying to warn the barmaid with word of Sir Eric's philanderings; she had come to the Hall to have things out with him. Gondy swore ruefully; the idea of having thus surprised the secret irked him.

While we discussed it, we heard old Bradshaw squawking at us, and we emerged from the cellar, to find her and a strange man there. The man touched his cap and said Sir Eric had sent him back with our car, and wanted him to bring the dog-cart; our host was detained and would not be back until later in the evening.

"Decent of him to send back the car," said Murchison. "You'd better run into town with us for supper, Bill; bring you back afterward."

THE man departed toward the stables, and I told the old witch we would not be on her hands for dinner. She grinned and cackled something about Denemere, and Gondy asked her where that was. She waved her skinny hand vaguely, and said it was a place that had been let for the season to furriners, and shuffled away.

"She means the shooting season, which is on," Gondy explained, as we started back toward the lower regions. With that, I remembered.

"Having thus settled important matters," I said, "suppose you guys join me in trying to learn whether we've unearthed King John's treasure."

We settled down around the Baby, gripped by the thrill that came every time we made a strike, whether worth while or not. As nearly as we could figure, metal had been encountered ten feet down; the kickback registered iron one minute, gold the next, as though unable to make up its mind. The reaction was entirely different from that occasioned by the lead sheet, but this substance was of approximately the same size, as we determined by running the Baby over the ground, back and forth, making soundings. Excitement took hold of us as we marked out the spot in the hard-packed floor, getting the same reaction from all of it; because, whatever it might be, gold was assuredly a part of the substance.

"Ten feet down—that'll be one hell of a dig," said Murchison. "See here; it's getting late, so why not run in to town now for supper, and restore that letter to our friend Rose, then come back here and make a night of it? Sir Eric ought to be back, and we'll let him share the glory of wielding that shovel. Earth wouldn't be so bad, but the sand under this floor is the very devil to scoop out."

"All right," I said. "And if we can get to town before closing hours, let's get a bottle of whisky to help with tonight's job. I think we're going to have something to celebrate."

This was true enough, but not as I thought.

We were bundling into the car when Bradshaw and old Giles begged a ride into town, since it was Saturday night and they were for the cinema and a bit of a holiday with the master's permission. They had relatives in Long Walpole and would return on the

She came close to me — and slapped me twice across the face. "That for old times, Mr. Carson!" she cried.

morrow. So we crowded them in, and found the gas-tank low, thanks to Sir Eric's lady-chasings.

Getting to town, we dropped the precious pair. I landed at the inn to give back the letter, and the other two went off to find petrol and whisky, since there was no off-sale at the tavern.

Rose was not in sight. I asked for her and found that she was in her own "parlor" at the back, and was taken there. Here were two rooms, beautifully furnished; and the ugly barmaid had become a gracious young woman, who invited me to have tea from a Sheffield urn that would have made any collector's heart turn over with envy.

"Thanks; you're very kind," I assented. "We ran into town to get dinner, and are returning later to the Hall; some work has come up."

"Sir Eric has returned?"

"No." I produced the folded paper. "I stopped in to give you this. It must have fallen out of sight under your car. I'm glad to see, by the way, that the bump on your forehead has left no mark to speak of."

I was trying to pass off the matter casually; but no soap—as she took the paper, her eyes rested on mine. Perhaps I was blushing.

"You read it?" she asked, in her queer direct fashion, as though we were old friends.

"Sorry. My friends found it—didn't know that you must have dropped it—"

A telephone was on the wall. Its jangling ring interrupted my stammerings, to my quick relief. A word of apology, and she went to it.

"Oh, it's you!" she said. "I drove out to see you today, but found you gone as usual. What about? You'd scarcely like it said over the telephone, would you? Besides, I have visitors."

She paused, listening. When she spoke again, there was a bite in her voice that made me sit up.

"Never mind all that, Eric. Keep your pretty falsities for the Frenchwoman. I've warned you, and for the last time. . . . I'm wearing it now, do you understand? And I intend to wear it in future. I'm afraid you'll have to face the music, my dear. . . . Oh, I say! Don't get ugly, old chap. Two can play at that game, you know; and I happen to hold all the cards. No doubt you're calling from Denemere? Not very well done, my dear Eric. Good-by."

As she hung up, I could hear the explosive mutter of oaths over the wire. Sir Eric must certainly have received a headful, I thought. That quiet, forceful delivery of hers carried a punch, and it amused me. Wearing—what was she wearing?

She came back to the table and poured from the silver urn. With my cup, she gave me a quick, frank little smile, dropping all pretense.

"Sorry, Mr. Carson. I expect you've heard no end of gossip."

Then I noticed the wedding-ring on her left hand. The meaning of her phrases over the wire struck me abruptly. Nor did I make any pretense.

"You English people," I rejoined, "assuredly have the knack of understatement down to fine art! Yes, I think I understand. I'd hate to be in his shoes when you really cut loose on him!"

"Afraid I'll have to. May run out to see him tonight. I've been a patient Griselda too long." She folded her hands and looked at me thoughtfully. "I know you're here on business of some kind. As I told you today, please be careful! He has great charm, ability, every talent. He has only one lack, and the man who has this lack is beyond hope. He has no loyalty—either to me or to anyone else."

"I see what you mean, now," I replied, and thanked her for the warning. "In his own interest, I think he's tied to us, though."

"That's precisely what I thought, once," she replied, twisting the ring on her finger. Then she broke into a smile, shifted the subject adroitly, and we had no further mention of personalities. It was a pleasant little visit.

"She's a really charming woman," I said, telling Gondy and Murchison about it while we sat at dinner. "She has the knack of putting you at your ease; I've met great ladies who lacked it."

Gondy nodded. Murchison chided me for a wolf, and said we had better take her warning seriously. They were both disturbed and uneasy; Sir Eric had lost his appeal so far as we were concerned, and the idea of getting involved in an ugly domestic tangle was not pleasant. . . .

We talked it over on the way out to the Hall. We were all dumb nitwits; none of us caught the significant things that might have pointed up the truth for us. We agreed, however, on a vague feeling that the quicker we were away, the better. So we decided to end the search on whatever it was that we had found, and then pull out for green fields and pastures new. Gondy said he had already got wind of a most promising venture.

"All right, boys," I said, as we pulled up at the dark Hall. "Let's get the Baby packed first thing, then dig. If we've got the treasure, well and good; if not, quit cold. We're under no obligation to Sir Eric."

This decided, we hustled down cellar and lighted the lanterns. Disassembling the Baby, we packed it and the carriage in their cartons and loaded them into the back of the car. The lock on this had not been repaired; nobody thought of it as an important thing.

Sir Eric had not returned, so we hung up the lanterns and attacked the job awaiting us, and went at it with a vim. When we got through the hard-packed earth and clay on top, sinking a ten-foot shaft through sand was tough work until we bethought us to get a couple of buckets of water and wet the sides of the shaft.

An hour passed, and most of another, before we struck something solid. It proved to be one end of a small box or chest of some kind. In order to clear this, we had to enlarge the hole considerably, and took turns grubbing away at the bottom of the shaft. Five minutes after being helped down to take my turn, I scraped out a whitish object; it proved to be a skull of some sort, which turned to dust as I brought it into the light—all but some teeth. It was the skull of a horse or mule.

We wet down the walls of the shaft anew so there would be no cave-in, got a rope from the stables, and presently had the box cleared. It was surprisingly small but very heavy, and seemed to be of badly rusted iron covered with bull-hide. We hauled it up into the light and freed it of the rope. I gave it one stroke with the pick that shattered it—and such a blaze of excitement gripped us as we had never before known.

OUT of that chest fell all sorts of rotted matter—and amid it a sheen of gold and glitter of jewels that left us dumb. None of us could utter a word. Murchison leaned over and picked up something and shook off the rot—cloth wrappings, no doubt. It was a crown, a rim of gold set with golden spikes, and in the spikes were jewels. Gondy clawed out a necklace, a round of great golden knobs and chains, held it up, then laid it down again and came to his feet.

"I—I'll get a sack," he said hoarsely, and picking up one of the lanterns, went out of the cellars. Murchison looked up at me—we were sitting beside the chest—and his face was white as a sheet, his eyes like saucers.

"Bill!" he said, and licked his lips. "It is! Look at the crown—the King's crown, just like in pictures!"

"That's not all." I stirred the mess before us and brought to light rings, bracelets and other glittering gauds. "King John's treasure, no doubt of it. Won't do us any good, Murch. We're not looters. This will have to go to the British Museum."

"Yeah, I expect so," he assented. "Crown jewels, Bill. It'd be a crime to bootleg this stuff, melt it up." He rubbed the crown with his cuff, brightening the gold, then perched it on his head. It slid over one ear, and he looked like a drunken sailor playing Neptune. "Lordy! Me, wearing King John's crown!"

We played with the stuff, raking out rings and arm-bands and what-not, but realization that in common decency we could not keep it had a chilling effect on our ardor. That crown fascinated Murchison. He rubbed it up some more, put it on his head again, and came to his feet, posturing beside the huge pile of sand and dirt removed from the hole.

"Look, Bill!" he exclaimed. "We might take this stuff back to Boston before turning it in. Look what publicity we'd get—our pictures in all the papers! If we put the Baby on the market commercially, what a break it'd be! Why, it'd be a million dollars' worth of free advertising—"

The crown, which was too small for him, slipped off his head. He made a wild grab for it, lost balance and stepped smack into the hole behind him. He went down, with a smothered yell. The crown rolled across the floor. I caught up the lantern and went to the edge of the hole. There sat Murchison on the bottom—or part of him. His fall had brought down enough sand to cover him to his chest; its weight held him immovable.

"Bill! It's caved in on me!" he gasped. "Any more will bury me—gimme a hand, quick! I can't move!"

There was a step behind me—Gondy, I supposed.

"Come on, Gondy," I said. "You take the light, and—"

"Thanks," said another voice—not that of Gondy. The lantern was taken from my hand. I turned. There was Sir Eric, holding up the lantern in one hand, and in the other a pistol that pointed squarely at me.

"He'll keep, Carson. That hole will make a good grave for you too. . . . Back off, you fool!" his voice snarled acidly. "D'you want me to blow hell out of you, you blasted American rotter? Put those hands up! Back—move back, I tell you!"

Aghast and incredulous, thinking for a moment that he had gone mad, I obeyed him and moved away from the hole. He followed me, with the light and the gun, backing me until I came to one of the massive columns that upheld the roof. He ordered me to reach my arms out around it. I did so. Something—someone—caught my wrist and knotted a cord around it—Sir Eric was not alone! My wrists were made fast; I stood there, bound

to the column, helpless. He looked at the stuff on the floor, and laughed excitedly.

"Here's a rum go as ever was, sure enough!" he cried. "It was here all the while, and me thinking you were a pack of blessed idiots for swallowing my fairytales! Well, live and learn. Kind of you to dig it up for us. Thanks for leaving the machine neatly packed where we could get it, too. Better get the stuff together, my dear—and don't step on that crown."

I WAS still stupefied, unable to account for his attitude. His companion moved, a dark shape in the obscurity; I caught a whiff of perfume—and I knew that odor. It clarified everything, startled me into mental acuity. Félice, by the gods! Gondy's former sister-in-law, our deadly enemy!

She moved into the light, removed a dark cloak she wore, put it on the floor and into it scooped the gold and the crown. She stood up and looked at me, laughing wildly, came close to me, and slapped me twice across the face.

"That for old times, Mr. Carson!" The beauty of her, lighted up by exultation and inner ferocity, was something to see. Sir Eric caught her by the arm and wrested her aside.

"None o' that, my dear." He dominated her with his coldly savage manner. "Get the stuff up to the car and wait for me. And mind, no tricks with Gondy! Leave him as he is. Slip a knife into him, and I'll wring your pretty neck! There'll be no murder done here to get Scotland Yard after us. We've got what we wanted, and far more. Get!"

She-devil as she was, she was afraid of him. Murchison, who had been cursing furiously, had fallen silent. Her golden hair fell about her face as she leaned over, gathered up the cloak with its precious contents, and slipped away into the darkness; she held a flashlight that pierced the road for her. Sir Eric watched her off, picked up the lantern and went to the hole, and looked down. Murchison swore at him luridly. He laughed, came back to me, put the lantern on its ceiling-hook, got out cigarettes and lighted one.

"I'll just have a word with you, since you're a man of some sense," he observed amiably. "Now, take notice: The Frenchman is knocked out and tied up; not hurt bad. I'm off with Félice and a fast car; this time tomorrow we'll be across the Channel, with that machine of yours, and the loot you've so kindly provided us."

"You treacherous rat!" I said. "Think you can get away with it? Not much."

"That's the point, my lad," he replied coolly. "Think, for a minute; think. All you can get after us for is taking the machine. Would the game be worth the candle?"

I could not think at all; I was in a mental riot. The "foreign woman at Denemere"—the broken lock on our car—the way we had walked directly into this trap—

"So she and you together laid the snare for us!" I said.

He nodded cheerfully. "Right. Suppose we're run down for taking your machine? Then your little game will be cooked for good. We'll know nothing about any machine, any gold, and you'll have no proof—all you'll get will be publicity, and you won't relish it by half."

"You forget Lady Poynter," I said.

This staggered him for an instant. "Oh, you know about Rose, eh? Let her be Lady Poynter, and be damned to her, now," he replied. "I'm off for good. I'll get the marriage annulled, quick enough—or she can do it, blast her!" His mirthless, explosive laugh burst forth. "Aye, let her do it! Now, when the servants return tomorrow you'll be freed, and no harm done. So take my advice. If Félice had had her way, you'd be dead. I'm too wise for that sort o' thing; this is no bally cinema, y'know! You're stuck; so accept it. I'll leave the light to keep ghosts from troubling you—"

He swung around, strode away and was gone, leaving the lantern.

"All right, Murch?" I demanded.

"Yeah, but can't move. Heard it all. How about you?"

"Tied to the pillar here."

Shrewd Sir Eric! The more I thought over his advice, the more sense it made. Félice must have put him up to the whole game. Knowing its value, the Baby was what she was after. He had dreamed up a plausible treasure yarn—what a break for them that we had really found treasure! Now they had it and the Baby to boot.

They had planned the job for tonight, with the servants out of the way, and would probably hide their loot and skip out by air for the Continent. Even if we caught them, we might recover nothing, and the publicity would do us no good at all. They had a car, too. I heard the engine start, speed up, then lessen in the darkness outside.

"I'm afraid he talked sense, Bill," came Murchison's voice, drearily. "She's smart."

"I hate to admit it. I hate to let 'em get away with it," I replied. "After all, the gold would do us no good. We might stop 'em, but would recover nothing. It's losing the Baby that hurts."

"Me too. Though we can always build another. But can you wish that guy any worse luck than being tied up to Félice?"

"I dunno." I tugged vainly at my bonds. "She'll be tied up to him; I imagine that might be worse yet. Maybe we'd better let 'em go and play safe. How are you?"

"Not so hot. More sand is slipping down around me. Say, Bill! Remember that horse-skull? I can feel something hard with my foot at the end of the hole. A horse would maybe have one box on each side to balance the load. If there's another here—"

"Check it!" I halted him. "Who's there? Speak up, you!"

A slight laugh came from behind me. Hands touched wrist and worked with the cords.

"No use; I'll have to cut it," said a voice. "Steady on, now."

The voice was familiar. The long connecting cord between my wrists, around the big pillar, was parted; the speaker came forward into the light, holding a small knife. It was Rose. She worked at the knots about my wrists; a dark raincoat cloaked her.

"Where'd you come from? How long have you been here?" I demanded.

"Too long. I heard it all," she said, sawing at the knots. "I came out here to see him—sorry I dared not intervene before. I had to choose between impulse and common sense. So must you, I expect. All clear—help Mr. Murchison."

We went to the hole. Murch was buried to his chin but had one hand free. I reached down with the shovel and got part of him cleared. We had been using rope and bucket to get the sand out. I let down the rope; he took a grip and wriggled himself loose, and we hauled him up. Beyond an excited word, he scarcely noticed Rose, but caught up the bucket.

"I'll get some water—keep it from caving in—and see to Gondy," he ejaculated and departed on the run.

Rubbing my chafed wrists, I stood looking at Rose.

"WE owe you a good deal," I said. "What did you mean just now—about choosing?"

"It's clear enough. He's gone, with her; I had to let them go," she said

Bedford-Jones At His Best

"TANAGRA FIGURINE," another story in this remarkable series, will be a feature of our forthcoming April issue. Other good things this able and versatile author has been writing for you, and which will be published soon, include "The Bear Flag Flies"—a vivid novel of California in 1846; and a fascinating new series of historical dramas we have tentatively titled "The Emerald Sphinx."

calmly. "I'm on hand as a witness, if you want to stop them. You might convict them—of what? Theft? Assault? You might recover your machine, whatever that is; but would it all be worth while? They'd have the gold hidden, be sure of that."

"I'm afraid so. Do you want him back?"

She smiled faintly and shook her head.

"As you said, he goes to his worst punishment, a life with her. Let him go."

Murchison came back, panting, and hurriedly sluiced water on the sides of the hole.

"Gondy's blacked out. I loosed him. He'll come around," he gasped. "Bill, get to work! Clear the hole, down there; the other box—oh, hell!" He blinked at Rose, taken aback by realization of her presence. "I forgot—"

"Never mind her; she's one of us," I said. "Hurry up, tie the rope to the bucket."

I lowered myself into the hole and began sending up buckets of sand. Sure enough, a second box was there; one on either side of the horse, as Murchison had said. Presently Gondy came staggering in and sat down, holding his head. He and Rose and Murchison all talked at once. I paid no attention, but worked the box clear of the sand, made the rope fast, and we hauled it up.

I lost no time in attacking the box. This time, no rotted cloth greeted us; instead, it was full to the brim with little rolls of vellum, hard as metal. Gondy snatched one, drove the shovel through it—and out fell a stream of golden coins. The little rolls were wrapped coin, both gold and silver.

EVERYBODY babbling in wild excitement, we dumped out rolls untill we realized there was no sense in opening more. King John's gold! Here it was, sure enough; yet the edge of our excitement had been taken off by the first find. The only one of us not carried away by the thrill was Rose. She was interested, yes, but quietly so.

"There's no time to lose," she said now, "if you want to reach a telephone and get the police after them."

We looked at one another. Did we? It was a hard choice, sure enough. They had—or we supposed they had—the Baby, and the crown jewels to boot. We had this pile of money, of which we could quietly and easily dispose, and it looked like a lot.

"If we bring 'em back," said Murchison, "the chances are we gain little or nothing. And yet of course King John's gold is museum stuff. We couldn't just spend it, even if the Crown didn't have a prior claim."

"But the Baby, Murch—we've lost it!" I exclaimed.

"I know," he said gloomily. "That hurts, sure."

"You fellows decide," put in Gondy. "The machine is yours, not mine."

"Come on," I said, and rose. We scraped up the loose coins, dumped them in on top of the unopened rolls, and hefted the busted chest out to the open air to where the Fiat stood. The back end stood open and rifled; no mistake—the Baby was gone. We loaded in the chest, extinguished the lantern, and piled into the car—we were taking Rose with us, of course. The actual and visual loss of our machine hit me and Murchison hard.

As we crowded in, my foot struck against something.

"Here, wait—I'm tangled," I said. "What's this on the floor? A box?"

"Oh, yes," Gondy replied. "There was no room in back and I put it in front. It's that small carton of spare parts for the machine—"

"Holy mackerel!" Murchison let out a yip. "Bill! The tubes!"

"What tubes?" I said. "The spare ones?"

"Yes—all of 'em! I took the tubes out of the Baby while we were taking it apart, put 'em all in this one box—hey, you know what it means? We've got all the tubes! They can't use the Baby. We can build another—"

We all began to laugh hilariously until Rose caught the infection without knowing what it was about.

As to getting the police after Sir Eric and Félice—well, it proved a hard job, because at first they thought we were spoofing them. And by the time someone in authority was convinced that we were discussing immediate and important business, Félice and Sir Eric somehow made a get-away or dodged into hiding. So until one of those ancient jewels turns up and offers a new clue, that part of the story must remain unfinished.

Scrambled Supermen

A QUIZ

by G. BERTRAM SHELLY

SEEMS as though everything is topsy-turvy in the world today—even this quiz. Listed in the left-hand column are twenty-five given names and surnames of famous men; all were or are supermen of their past and present professions. Your first task is to unscramble the names; then, you are to shift the first names around until they are associated with their correct surname. To aid you, there are listed in the right-hand column, the twenty-five professions these men made famous, or vice versa.

Score yourself 4 points for each one you unscramble correctly: 60 is a fair score; 75, good; 85, very good; and 90 or over, excellent.

1.	LBLI STOP	Aviation
2.	SUBRET ALONERD	Boxing
3.	LDIENA LITNDE	Tennis
4.	ETNUK RABBCE	Aquatics
5.	LWYEI NOOBE	Trail-blazing
6.	OMT ADNE	Baseball
7.	KRAM TURH	Baseball
8.	AKNH LRCAK	Army
9.	NENBY RAMONH	Football
10.	ZDYIZ GHRIEG	Baseball
11.	EABB NEUNTY	Boxing
12.	OLU AMCRTRHUA	Army
13.	GNEE ZSRAENA	Golf
14.	OHJN L. NWOE	Track
15.	GLDOUAS BRGERGEEN	Baseball
16.	EGNE LUSLVIAN	Boxing
17.	EJSES ANRGEG	Football
18.	ONCNIE ROCTTEB	Boxing
19.	DRE CKMA	Baseball
20.	BOYOOHSCL OCKNRE	Football
21.	RGA DNEE	Diplomat
22.	LFRNKAIN OWRE	Baseball
23.	CJAK OOWD	Speed-boat racing
24.	THANNOY OORSVLTEE	Leader
25.	AEMSJ J. ESMPDEY	Boxing

Answers to Quiz

1. Wiley Post
2. Benny Leonard
3. Bill Tilden
4. Buster Crabbe
5. Daniel Boone
6. Dizzy Dean
7. Babe Ruth
8. Mark Clark
9. Tom Harmon
10. Lou Gehrig
11. Gene Tunney
12. Douglas MacArthur
13. Gene Sarazen
14. Jesse Owen
15. Hank Greenberg
16. John L. Sullivan
17. Red Grange
18. James J. Corbett
19. Connie Mack
20. Knute Rockne
21. Anthony Eden
22. Schoolboy Rowe
23. Gar Wood
24. Franklin Roosevelt
25. Jack Dempsey

The Message Stick

From Australia comes this wartime drama

by LOUIS KAYE

IT was a stick about two feet long and maybe an inch and a half in diameter. "What's that?" I said. "It's got carvings."

"Black fellers' carvings," Johnny said. "It's a message-stick. An Abo kid brought it in. I got to look for Mulga Jack."

"Who's Mulga Jack?" I knew what "mulga" meant; it's the name they give to small twisted narrow-leaved trees around the Australian back-country. A native word, so I figured Mulga Jack was a black—but in this I was mistaken.

"He's an old white prospector around here," Johnny said. "Struck it lucky a couple of years ago, and it aint all gone."

I walked out of the bar with Johnny. The black boy hadn't come into the bar—the law doesn't allow it. He was about fifteen or sixteen, with good teeth spread wide across his face and a skin like soot, only more shiny. He wore dungarees, a white shirt, and a big hat like a sombrero. He said his name was Yunti.

Johnny said: "I don't savvy this stick. I'm lookin' for an old cobber that does. You wait."

Johnny said "cobber," not "buddy." He's an Australian and the sound of his voice is different from mine, but most of the words he uses are the same. It's the sound more than the words that make the difference.

"You coming, Frank?" he asked me.

"Sure. I'll drink my beer first." I went back and drank it; it was warm and sticky.

"We've got no ice here," said the girl behind the bar. There was a girl now; a guy in shirtsleeves had been there when I ordered the beer.

"Well, it doesn't matter," I said.

She was a girl with some weight on her, and dry-looking yellow hair; she didn't care now about her dress or makeup, and I figured the heat had been too much or too long—or something had made her slip. She had wet, tired-looking eyes, and maybe she drank plenty herself.

I went with Johnny. The dame called after us: "You'll find the old feller around at Morgan's; they've been playing cards for two days."

Johnny was carrying the message-stick tucked under his good arm. The other one had been hit in New Guinea. We'd both been hit and got invalided down to Australia, and now we had leave. Johnny had asked me out to his folks' ranch—or "station," as they say down here—and we were on the way.

"Where's that black kid come from?" I asked.

"Orakoona," Johnny said. "'Bout two hundred miles out. Wild blacks work in there off the Territory border. Lonesome country."

It was lonesome even here, just that baked town in a wide plain that was mostly red dust and a little plant they call saltbush. We'd got here by plane and were going from here by truck, but there didn't look to be any place to go. The horizon, like the edge of the earth, sprawled across the sky in a thin line, twisting in heat haze. It was like Arizona, and the town was like a cow town, but there was a different flavor—something like Africa—worked in. There were cowboys around, but they called them stock-riders, and some were black.

"This is Morgan's," Johnny said. Johnny is a lanky sun-tanned guy, and the women all fall for him.

I looked at the shack. There were about fifty buildings in that town, and they were all about the same except in size—roofed and walled, mainly, with corrugated iron, which makes them hotter inside than out. But there's not much timber back there off the coast.

Inside, there were two old codgers sitting at a table in moleskins and white shirts. They looked as if they'd sat there so long that sunlight would hurt their eyes.

"Mulga," Johnny said, "what's this stick mean?"

The old man took the message-stick and held it by each end, turning it.

Across the table, the other old guy watched. They both had beards and were old-timers who'd prospected the country all around. The one called Mulga Jack had sold a mine for ten thousand pounds, so he could have gone and lived on the coast, but he'd always got drunk in towns like this, I guess. He was rawboned, with a long narrow nose.

He put the message-stick down. He didn't say anything, but he pushed his chair back and got up. His pants made contact with his socks again as he walked on stiff legs that were working cramps out of the muscles.

"It's for me, personal," he said. "It's from a black-fellow friend of mine." He looked at the other old guy. "Brumby," he said, "I've got to go Outback."

Then he looked at me and Johnny.

"Who's your cobber?" he asked Johnny. "A Yank?"

He shook hands with me and looked thoughtful.

"There's a countrywoman of yours," he said, "out at Orakoona. If you're going to sit down close up to that place, maybe she'd be glad to see you."

Johnny said: "Frank's coming out to Wurapilla with me. It's only seventy miles from home to Orakoona. But I didn't know Burke Redburne's wife was an American. I thought she came from up around Java way."

"Maybe she did, son. But she's American; I talked with her. She's homesick, and Burke don't help that complaint."

Johnny said: "He came from Java or Malaya somewhere, didn't he? Plenty of money, but too much whisky. Gets rough."

"Ask the Abos," the old man said. "Ask the kid that brought the message-stick. Ask Yunti."

WE started back to the hotel, and before we turned in at the doorway I knew she was there. A dust-covered car was outside, and I heard her voice, an American voice.

Maybe I stared. I know she did. Her lips were parted. Then they moved, and she said incredulously:

"Hello, *Frank!*"

I grinned. I said: "You remember Charley's?"

"I ought to remember," she said. "It wasn't much of a joint, but sometimes I wish I was back there."

"It was always a good place to eat," I said. "Then you went away with a show."

"The East. I married there—and now I'm here. What's it like back home, Frank?"

I said: "It's two years since I was home."

"It's ten," she said, "since I was."

"Yeah, you were only a kid when you went into show business," I said. I didn't tell her she still looked a kid; she wouldn't even have laughed at that one now. She was too tired—the heat and something worse than heat.

"That's a long time ago," she said. "What are you doing here, Frank? Your outfit's not around here?"

"No." I told her how I got there. Her eyes—blue eyes that still had misty depths in them—seemed to be searching my face for something.

"You got hurt in New Guinea, Frank?"

I said: "It didn't hurt much."

"You'll be going back," she said. "I hate war, Frank. I hate anything that hurts as much as war. I'd like to be a nurse; if only I could be some use! . . . Who nursed you—American nurses?"

"Sure; there's plenty here, Betty."

"I've never seen one. I've been stuck here, away from the coast. Frank, I've never nursed, and I can't train now in time. But there's something I could do, isn't there? If I got out to the coast, where there are American camps—"

She stopped then; she didn't look around, but she looked as if something were going to hit her from the back. I could see the guy over her shoulder; he'd just come out of the bar.

Illustrated by John Richard Flanagan—another Australian

"Black fellers' carvings," Johnny said. "It's a message-stick."

She looked around now, and said: "This is an old friend of mine from back home, Burke: Frank Patterson."

"Oh," said Burke Redburne.

I didn't like the way he said it. I didn't like the man to look at. He was mean. Maybe at one time he wasn't so gross and whisky-sodden but no girl in her senses would have married him now. I figured Betty wished she knew how not to stay married to him. It seemed to me she ought to have discovered a way before. But maybe a rich husband gets to be a habit. Maybe she was scared of being poor again.

WE didn't shake hands, that man and me. We just looked at each other, and anybody could have seen we weren't going to be friends. Betty could see it, but she didn't need to—she knew Burke would have no use for anybody who was a friend of hers, and she knew I wouldn't get along with a guy like Burke.

I saw Johnny then. "Hullo, Burke," he said.

Burke Redburne's face colored up in one of those hot angers that I knew burned up in him as they burn up in a spoiled child.

"Burke," he said, "is my first name."

Johnny had been grinning, but that wiped it off like a slap in the face. His lean tanned face looked as it did when he drew a bead on a Jap.

"I knew," Johnny said, "that Burke was your first name—but it was by your first name that I meant to call you. Anybody that's lived at Orakoona, which is neighbor to my own family's place, has always been known by his first name to us at home."

Burke Redburne didn't talk any more. He just went off, looking sulky, and towing his wife with him. They went to their rooms, I suppose; they were going to stay at the hotel.

"So you know her!" Johnny said.

We were back in the bar. I'd bought the drinks to soothe Johnny more than myself; but the drinks were still sticky-warm. And the flies were bad; that blonde at the bar was flicking at them with a towel.

"Yeah. Her name used to be McCabe. I still like the McCabe name best." I leaned on the bar counter; it was zinc-covered and it was hot. I watched the blonde still making war on the flies.

"Mrs. Redburne wants to go to the coast," the girl said. She pulled some of the strawy hair off her sticky forehead. "She told me so, last time she was here."

"When was that?" I said. I had an idea it was a long time ago.

The blonde wrinkled her sweaty forehead. "'Bout seven or eight months. That whisky-barrel don't let her see much of civilization."

I knew she wanted to get out of here herself. Maybe she and Betty had talked a bit and would talk a bit more.

"It's a funny thing," she added, "that in this age of liberty women can't go where they like! Especially wives. I'm glad I never married."

"Don't get sour on it at your age," Johnny said.

She laughed; you could see she didn't hate marriage so much. No woman does—not unless it's the kind of marriage Betty's was.

"Have this drink with me, boys," the blonde invited.

"Sure," I said. She was looking at me.

She said: "You've got a good kind heart, haven't you? And you're a Yank, same as she is. And you knew her back home. You'd do anything for her, wouldn't you?"

"What do you think I ought to do? Break up a marriage?"

"You're a big strong man," she said. "You've got big shoulders on you and big arms. Don't let them go to waste. You believe in destiny, don't you? How did you get here if it wasn't destiny?"

"It was Johnny," I said.

"Destiny just used Johnny, that's all. There's a whole lot of American boys, but it had to be you that made friends with Johnny and you that Johnny invited out here. And then, right while you're waiting for a truck, she has to turn up. It's destiny," she said.

She was very serious. It sounded as if it really was what she said too, the way she said it.

Then she said: "Now I'm telling you what to do. You beat Redburne up, and then take his wife to the coast."

I said: "That's a lot to do at one time."

"You do it," she said, "and I'm not the only one that'll whoop for joy. Everybody in this town and in the country for hundreds of miles around will remember you in their prayers. Even the blacks 'way out in the *myall* camps will be pleased to hear what you've done."

What could I say? What I said was: "Well, I don't know. Maybe."

She leaned over the bar till her face was close to mine. She said: "You *do* know, man! You've got a right to help a countrywoman out, and you're going to do it! What are you built so big for?"

I said: "I never promise women anything."

Johnny was looking at her thoughtfully. He said: "It's got to be as bad as that, has it?"

"It's got so bad," she said, "that even the blacks around the *gunyahs* say it stinks."

I said: "I guess she won't stand for it. I could see she wasn't going to stand for it any more."

"You're right." She nodded. "She's going to run. And what you've got to do is stop anybody running after her, and then you've got to run with her, so she won't be lonesome."

I lit a cigarette. "You've got it all planned out, sister."

"No," she said, "*I* haven't. Destiny has."

I was in the street with Johnny, watching camels go by. There were four camels, and two had packs; on another was a black boy but the one that walked first had a white rider. It was the old prospector—Johnny's old-timer pal.

He waved when he saw Johnny. He said: "So long, Johnny; if you see the trooper out around Wurapilla, tell him I'm over with the Hot Plain blacks, and I want to see him."

"All right," Johnny said.

The camels went away, slow and stately. I watched them. They were the first I'd seen, but there were plenty in here on the dry plains; now gas was rationed and tires were scarce, they were coming back on the tracks, Johnny said. He was looking along the trail for the dust of the truck that was going to take us out to his folks' place, but there was no sign of it.

Johnny was getting fretful. "Leave will be up soon," he said.

I said: "How'd you let them know you were coming home, Johnny?"

He said: "A cobber of mine was headed in from the coast and I told him to tell another feller I knew was coming this way to get word out to Wurapilla."

He didn't smile when he said it, because that's the way Johnny does things in his more serious moments; he's awful casual. But there was no telegraph to this place, and the mail was only once a month or thereabouts. It's a big lonesome country.

"I guess the message never arrived," I said. "Can't we hire something to drive?"

"There's not a car in the town with tires on it," Johnny said. "I've asked around."

"Well, camels and a buckboard." But I knew we didn't have the time.

"It's a hundred and fifty miles," Johnny said, "and we've got to get back to a war. We'd better have another drink."

THAT black boy Yunti, who had brought the message-stick, was squatting in the street. I noticed when his shirt-sleeve slipped up that he had a newly healed scar on his arm.

"Where'd you get that, boy?" Johnny asked, noticing it too.

The boy looked uneasy and didn't answer.

The old prospector said: "Johnny, tell the trooper I'm with the Hot Plains blacks, and I want to see him."

Before dusk we saw camels again—two bunches this time, but the second not far behind the first. And the second camels were the old prospector's.

"What did you come back for?" Johnny said.

"Didn't have to look far for the trooper, Johnny. I met him just out of town."

"He came in just ahead of you," Johnny nodded. "Is that all you went out for?"

"Well, it wasn't a new mine," the old-timer admitted. And he looked at the black kid. "Yunti, you better come along with me."

But Yunti didn't go with him. Yunti got to his feet, backed round the corner of the hotel, and took to his heels.

The old-timer swore. "Sometimes I've got no tact. Just like chasin' quicksilver, to get him now. Well, there's others coming in, I reckon."

"What others?" Johnny said.

"Some of them Orakoona blacks," the old-timer said. And you could see he didn't want to say any more.

We didn't see Burke Redburne when we went into the hotel. The blonde said he was shut in his room and he'd stay there drinking whisky all the time he was in town.

"But he never gets so he's helpless," she said to me. "Don't be afraid to hit him because you think he's drunk and helpless."

"If he keeps in his room, I don't suppose I'll even see him," I said.

"He won't keep there all the time. He'll be around soon enough when—"

"When what?"

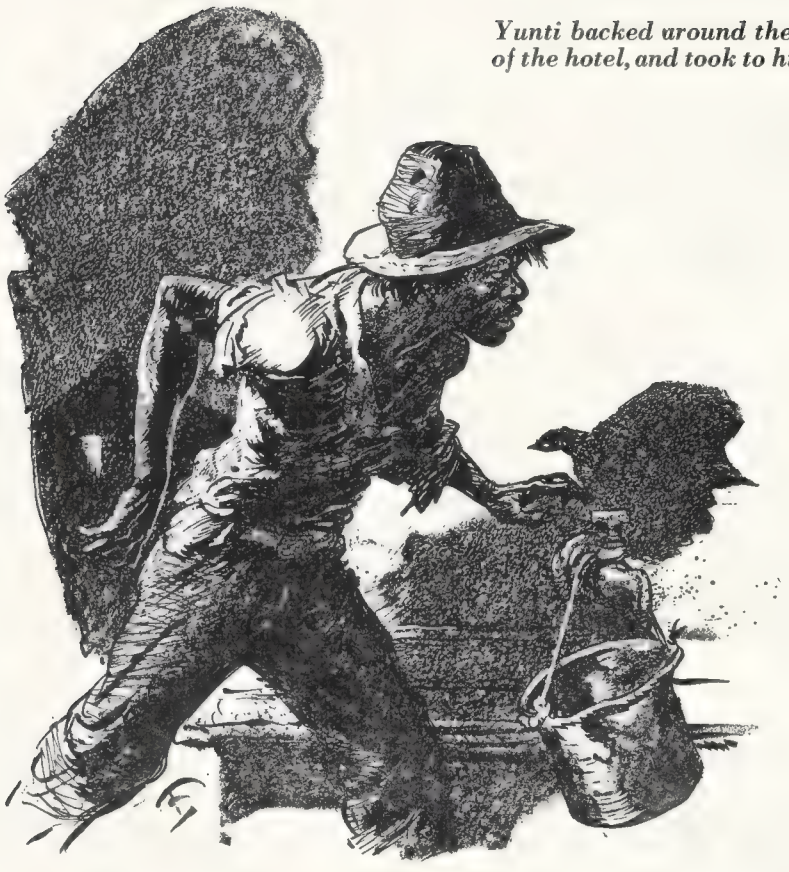
"Never mind. Somebody wants to see you tonight."

"Where?" I said.

"I'll show you a room where it's quiet."

I didn't think Betty had much to do with planning it, but it was likely she wanted to talk. We'd go over the old days and she'd get sad and maybe cry and it wouldn't do much good. But I went along.

Betty had changed her clothes, but I don't know what she wore; I never can tell you what a girl wore, only whether I liked it or not. She looked pretty, so I guess I liked what she wore. She still had a showgirl's body, and men would turn to look at that figure in any street and they'd think she was younger than she was, though even that was not more than twenty-nine, the same as my age. She had a face to go with the figure; not real beauty perhaps, but closely approach-



Yunti backed around the corner of the hotel, and took to his heels.

ing it. Strong sunlight had put some lines in her skin, and her mouth had a tight look, so that her lips were not as full as you knew they would be when her nerves were relaxed. People suffering physical pain have the same sort of mouth, or people angry, or people who hate.

She spoke of her home. "It's years now since I've had any home. A leopard may live in a cage, but you wouldn't say that's home to it, would you?"

I shook my head. I didn't act as if I was sorry for her, because I knew she would take that for granted but wouldn't like me to show it.

"Tell me about San Francisco," she said. "And Oakland."

"No," I said, "what's the good? It'll only make it worse."

"It won't matter," she said, "because I'm going home."

Her voice had dropped on the last words, so they were like a prayer. And I thought that's maybe all it was, a prayer.

I said: "I don't think either of us'll be going home till the war's over."

She was silent, and I thought maybe I'd been cruel. Then she said:

"Frank, call me 'honey'—just once! Nobody's called me that since I left America. I heard it in the movies in Singapore before we came here—before the war, and Burke thought he could make money out of sheep or cattle. But I haven't heard it for so long—"

"All right," I said. "All right, honey." It took me back too; we were both still in our 'teens, and her head was on my shoulder while I drove the roadster those summer nights, in Hayward—her family had lived there before they moved to Oakland.

Then I could see she was nearly crying. The light in that room was only a kerosene lamp; there was no electricity in the town, so it was a dark town outside. When I looked from the window, pulling the shade back, I couldn't see anything but a black wall.

I THOUGHT of that boy who had run. I wanted to take Betty's mind off those homesick thoughts.

"There was a boy called Yunti," I said. "He was sitting down in the street, and he got up and ran when an old-timer with camels told him to go along with him."

"Yes, I know Yunti," she said. "He was my best-liked boy back at Orakoona."

I hadn't done any good. Back at Orakoona! She didn't want her body or her thoughts to go back there.

"Yunti ran because he was afraid to answer questions," she said.

"There was a message-stick," I said. "I'd never seen one before. Nobody around here knew what it meant, not even Johnny, who lives out that way when there's no war. So he took it to an old-timer. I don't know; maybe it was a message about gold."

"It wasn't about gold," Betty said. "No, it wasn't about gold. It was about lead."

"A lead mine, huh?"

"No, lead bullets. That's what Yunti was scared about. He didn't want to talk about bullets. They're afraid to be connected with shootings, even if they don't do the shooting themselves. It's better to run away into the mulga and forget it. They're very primitive, even the tame ones; the first thing they can think of when anything goes wrong is the wilderness. They want to go and hide."

"So Yunti will keep going back home?" I said. But everything I said seemed wrong. Why did I have to say "back home"?

"No," she said, "he won't go far. He knows I need him. He wouldn't desert me; he's loyal."

HER face was still now in the lamplight, with no quiver in her lip or cheek.

"Frank," she said, "if I told you what Yunti's going to help me do, you wouldn't try to stop me; but I don't want you to know. It does no good. I just wanted to talk with you. . . . Did you marry, Frank?"

"No. . . . Listen, honey—you were talking about bullets. Then you were talking about Yunti. There's a wound in that black boy's arm. Is there going to be some more shooting?"

"I'm afraid so," she said. "Unless the police trooper can stop it, there'll be some more. But we don't talk of it, Frank. That's why Yunti ran; he didn't want to talk."

"And yet somebody sent a message-stick," I said. "An old-timer read it, and he looked for a cop."

"If the old man told the police, maybe he thought it was best. And I suppose it is. It's got to stop."

"What has?" I said. "The bullets that make wounds like that on Yunti's arm?"

"Yes," she said.

"Who starts the shooting? Why does it happen?"

"Lubras—women," she said.

"Blacks fighting over their women?" But I knew that wasn't it. There'd been something in Redburne's face that told me what it was; you can tell a guy that's a chaser. You can, anyway, when the women are native women.

"Don't follow it up, Frank," she said. "It does no good."

I said: "All right. You do what you feel is best, but don't let Yunti act rash. Don't let Yunti shoot too sudden."

She said: "Frank, let's talk about home. I'm going home. If I can get to the coast, and work there at something, then I'll get the money—I'll go home."

Her husband had plenty of money, but she wasn't going to touch it. She was going to work and save the money; that was the way she was going to do it.

I said: "Well, if you're on the coast, and there's anything I can do—"

Then I saw her eyes come wide open. I heard her say:

"Frank! Oh, Frank!"

The door had opened and Burke had come in behind me. I twisted and he dropped his arms.

"Get out!" he said. "Betty, you go to your room! I suppose his voice made you homesick," he sneered, "but he's just riffraff. A cheap Army private—"

I let him go on; I didn't want to start anything with Betty there. Maybe she had seen a lot of things happen, but I didn't want her to see anything I did to that man she had married. After all, she'd married him; there must have been one time when she cared.

Yes, I let him go on. Then somebody else came in through the doorway and shut the door and turned the key.

It was the girl out of the bar.

She said: "Go on and hit him! All the town will love you! All the blacks around Orakoona will throw a corroboree in your honor. Go on and hit him! Go on, go on!"

Burke Redburne had turned to her; he walked in a crouching way across the room, and he got her by the neck with both hands and flung her across to the other wall.

I said: "All right; I'll hit him!"

Nobody counted the times I hit him, but there was a noise on the locked door. I heard the blonde say:

"It must be the cop. He's breaking the door down. You'd better get out by the window."

She had picked herself up. She was standing alongside Betty, and they were both white, looking at Burke Redburne.

I said: "I don't have to get out by any window. Let the cop come in. I'll show him what I've done."

THE door broke in. But it was Johnny. He'd heard my voice and found the door locked and thought I was in a jam. Of course, he'd be with me in any kind of trouble.

"Breaking up the furniture!" said Johnny. "Breaking up Burke—oh, I beg his pardon; I mean *Mister* Redburne." He looked down at him. "You hit him! Dinkum!"

The hotelkeeper came in then. He was a little guy. It was a crummy hotel, but it was all he had, and he didn't like doors being smashed.

He said: "Help me get him to bed. Help me clean up the mess. We don't want the cops in."

We were down in the bar again, and it was late. We were the only ones there, and Johnny was fretting because the truck hadn't come.

"But maybe you don't want to come out to the station with me now," he said.

"Why not now?"

"The lady. You certainly beat up her husband. The whole place is humming with it, and you're very popular. But of course you're expected to go right through with it. Everybody expects you to carry her off."

I said: "I haven't seen her since; maybe I won't see her again."

"Everybody," Johnny said, "thinks you now belong in each other's arms."

I said: "Listen, Johnny; that big stiff didn't touch his wife in there, that time. The dame he laid hands on was that blonde out of the bar. That was when I hit him. Do I have to be in love with her too?"

Johnny said: "Well, everybody knows who you hit him for. You've got a part to play."

"And a lot of money, too? I'm a private, Johnny, and a private don't get a general's pay."

"Mercenary considerations," Johnny said, "don't enter into it. You put her on a horse and ride off with her."

I said: "You've been drinking warm beer all day, Johnny; you better go to bed."

"I don't mean anything," Johnny said.

We went outside for a walk in that sandy street, so we'd cool off. It was a nice night—starlit, but there was no moon. The town was dark; nearly everybody was in bed. But a black boy passed us, hugging walls, slinking like a shadow.

I said: "Looked like that boy Yunti."

"Plenty would, this time of night," Johnny said. "There's a lot of blacks around town; there's a big band traveling by."

WE went in then and found our rooms. I didn't sleep much. It wasn't the heat, alone; I kept mulling things over, and Betty's face was there in the dark so plain it was as if a light was on it.

In the morning when I got up the cop was waiting for me.

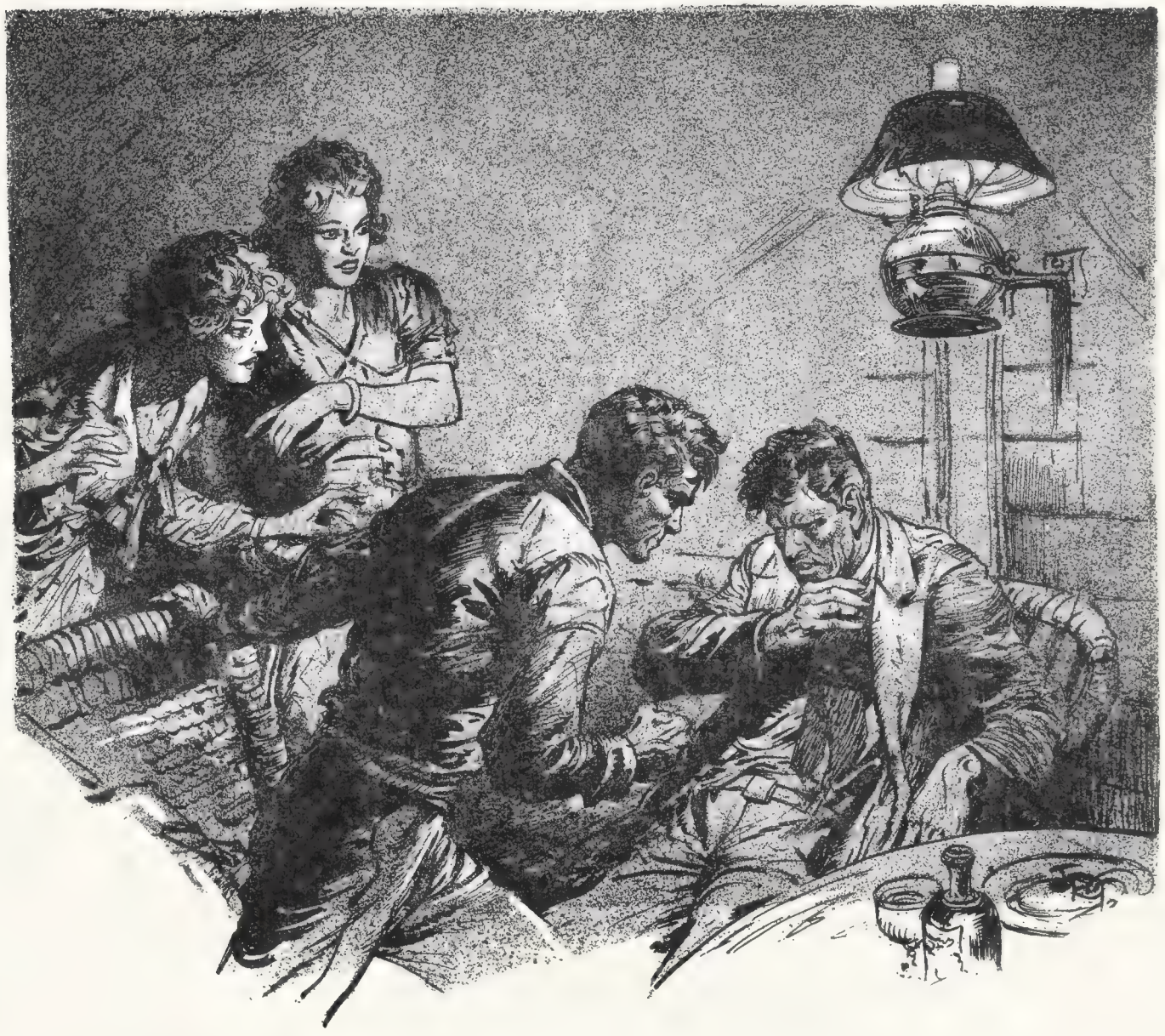
He said: "Good morning, Yank. They tell me last night you beat up a feller."

"Yeah," I said. "So what?" And I grinned. I didn't want a row with him; he looked a good guy. He was tall and tanned, without a uniform, and he looked kind of careless.

"So you come around with me," he said. "We'll talk where there's some privacy, soldier."

We got around to the police station. Johnny wasn't up, or I knew he'd have been through that compound gate with me too, threatening to pull the place apart if they shut me in.

MULGA JACK



I heard the blonde say: "It must be the cop. You'd better get out by the window."

There was red dust and nothing growing in the compound. There were camels and black boys and some huts and a block of cells. The main police building was right in the middle. The whole outfit was of corrugated iron, whitewashed.

The trooper showed the way into his office. When I looked at him I thought of Mounties and Texas Rangers; he had to keep the law in a lot of country and it must have been tough. But he looked as if that wouldn't worry him much. He was dusty and seemed a bit tired for so early in the day. But I remembered something then; a couple of those camels in the compound had fresh saddle-marks—not yesterday's but more like last night's. There were the native police still around the compound too, as if they had been out in the dark.

"Your name's Patterson, isn't it? I'm Trooper McMinn." He leaned back in his chair. "You've known Mrs. Redburne for some time, haven't you."

"Yeah. Since when we were kids."

"Did you know that last night she left the town?"

I shook my head, but I guess he could see I wasn't very surprised.

"Did she tell you any plans?"

"Nope."

"Hint at any? You had some idea she wanted to leave her husband?"

"Yeah, sort of an idea."

"What did you hit Burke Redburne for?"

"He grabbed that blonde from the bar, by the neck."

He asked me a lot more about the room and the locked door. Then he said:

"Did you know Burke Redburne was killed last night?"

That startled me. "No, I didn't. I never hit him hard enough for that!"

"He was hit by bullets. Out on the Hot Plains track. Do you think his wife shot him?"

"No," I said. But I felt cold. She'd talked about Yunti's being loyal to her. Did she know then what was going to happen?

"If she didn't do it, Yank," the trooper said, "who did it? You?"

I laughed. I said: "Doggone, I haven't even got a gun. I've had to shoot Japs till I wouldn't want to pack a gun to shoot anybody else."

He looked serious. "I'd rather not do it, but you'll have to go in the calaboose till I know some more. I'll try to make you comfortable."

I said all those police buildings were whitewashed iron, but the cells were concrete, and cooler than if they were iron; still, I knew they were going to be hot enough. I sweated in mine.

Johnny came around. "All this is crazy," he said. "What do you want me to do? There's not any Yank or

Aussie troops near enough, but I can scare up somebody."

"You were with me till midnight last night, and after that you snored the roof off, so you didn't know where I was, Johnny. That's just too bad for me."

"Did you go off with that dame? If you did, you didn't shoot Burke Redburne. I'm going to talk to the trooper."

He went off and came back with the trooper. The cop unlocked the door.

"Soldier," he said, "Johnny here swears by his stars you won't disappear if I let you out. I'm putting you on parole. Report every four hours."

I walked out, but I still wasn't free, and I figured I might have to go back in again.

"If we could find that boy Yunti, maybe he could tell something," I said to Johnny.

"There's none of the Orakoona blacks around," Johnny said. "There won't be, either, till all this has blown right away. If the trooper can't find them, we can't."

It did look that way. I said: "Which way could Betty have gone? There's not a car here with tires, you said. Did she ride a horse?"

"That's how she went," Johnny said. "I was talking to the police boys. The trooper's going to trail her soon."

"Did she go alone, Johnny?"

"There was a black boy rode with her. I reckon he got the horses."

"It'd be Yunti, wouldn't it?"

"I don't know," Johnny said. "I don't think he'll stick with her when he knows the trooper's coming."

The trooper went out and came back before dark with his black police-boys. They were good trackers, and they'd found horses—but they hadn't found Betty or the boy who had helped her.

"There was a truck's trail," Johnny said. "She was picked up by a truck. She's a long way off by now. The trooper's come back because he had only camels. Maybe he'll go out looking for the Orakoona blacks, but he might just act as if he isn't interested in them."

That's the way he did act, but it never helped any. I wasn't still in the jail, but I was still tied to it like a dog to a tree.

THEN the truck that was to pick us up came in. Johnny's old man himself was aboard, a tall rawboned guy like Johnny. I wanted Johnny to go to his home without me.

"I can't go," I said. "I've got a leg in a cell."

The truck was to go at dawn. Sometime in the night, that blonde out of the bar woke me.

She said in the dark: "Make a light, but don't speak loud. I want you to see something."

It was a message-stick.

I said: "Where'd you get it?"

"Black brought it in a little while ago and gave it to the yard-boy, telling him to give it to me."

"Where's that black now?" I said; I wanted to yell it at her; I wanted to get after that native before he was too far away.

But she said: "You can't catch a shadow; he's to hell and gone by now. He's done his job, and we've got to know what this means. You wake Johnny."

I didn't need to be told that. I shook him awake. I said:

"Look, Johnny; find that old guy that can read a message-stick. Find him pronto!"

Johnny looked at the stick, then began pulling his pants on over his pajamas. We got out in the street. We nearly ran.

Mulga Jack was at the same place, but he wasn't playing cards with the other old-timer now. They were both drunk, talking about early gold strikes, and getting sentimental.

"Read this, Mulga!" Johnny said. "Quick! We want to know—"

But the old guy was too drunk. Johnny shook him and it didn't seem to do much good.

"Hell, you're the only man that can read it!" Johnny said. "And you're too damn' drunk! Get his other arm, Frank!" We walked him outside, to cold water. It worked, partly. We got him back to the light, and his eyes looked clearer.

He held the message-stick for a long time, turning it over, fighting back the fog in his head.

"It's about a white woman," he told us finally. "I reckon it's Mrs. Redburne. She's gone away in a truck."

"There's more, isn't there?" I said. "We know that much already."

"There's more," the old-timer answered. "Le'me puzzle it out."

He studied the bands and whorls. He said: "This part of it means the white woman is going to the coast. She does not know the white man has been killed. There's more, but—"

I was looking at Johnny. I said: "You see, she never knew!"

Johnny nodded, but didn't say anything. He was watching the old codger screwing up his eyes at that primitive message.

"Well, I reckon the black that carved this part," the old man said at last, "only meant *me* to know about it."

Johnny gave me a quick look, and then talked at the old man hard and fast:

"Look, you've got to read it out, Mulga. My cobber's got pulled, over that Redburne killing, and if there's anything that'll clear him—"

"It'd mean telling the trooper," the old-timer objected. "That'd mean giving the name of the black that done the shooting. I'm not going to do that, son. The Orakoona and Hot Plains blacks have had a bad time with that lubra-stealing swine!"

"It was a black, then?" Johnny said.

"I'm not going to give his name."

I knew Johnny was thinking of Yunti; so was I.

"You don't have to," Johnny said. "Not his name. But you can show this message-stick to the trooper. You can tell him it says it was a black. How's he going to know what black it was? None of 'em'll ever talk, but he understands they've had a raw deal, and one of 'em was bound to get Redburne in the end."

And that's how it was done. The trooper shook hands and said goodby. But I didn't go out with Johnny to his home and his folks.

"You're going after her?" Johnny said. "I sort of felt it would happen that way."

I said: "I'll be seein' you, Johnny. Right now, I'm in a hurry. There's a guy come in on his way out to the coast with a car—"

ONLY I didn't overtake her. For a month, I didn't know where she was. Then our outfit shifted along the coast, and I went into a place to eat—and she was there. . . .

"Dancing for the boys is all I can do," she said. "It's nice here. It's like the old days at Charley's."

"Yeah, maybe it is. But you don't want to spend all your life here."

"There are a lot of nice boys coming in," she said. "This place is just like back home, with all the boys coming in."

"Sure! Too many nice boys, honey. I want you interested in only one."

She was smiling when I said it, but the smile slowly faded. She said:

"You mean it?"

"What else would I mean? I'm only a private and I've got no general's pay—but there's a job waiting around till the war's over, and the war won't last forever. We'll go back home and get married. And now let's go some place where we can be alone."

We walked through the town to find a place. In all the stores there were prices in dollars and cents, and I could see Betty's eyes shining as she looked at American uniforms going by, and listened to American voices.

"There's so many of our boys here, it's like being back home," she said. "Darling, while we're waiting, it'll be just like that—like back home."

She was nearly crying, but I knew she had never been happier than she was right then.

The Ring-tailed Roarer

The saga of a young stalwart who dared to challenge even the cohorts of Mike Fink himself.

By MARK J. BOESCH

JOE SHANNON was seventeen before he could lick his old man. He had warmed up to that magnificent feat by first taking on all the young fellows in the settlement and roundabout. He could take any of them by the time he was fifteen; but he couldn't lick the old man until two years later, after getting more experience in fighting and by getting husky enough from the hard work the old man made him do on the river-bottom farm. Even then it was a tough fight.

It must be said to old Jim Shannon's credit that he was sixty-seven before his oldest boy could whip him. Jim had married late. His early manhood hadn't exactly been conducive to marriage. Jim had fought the redcoats, traveled down the Ohio with George Rogers Clark, then went to keelboating. Finally, as he felt his youth slipping away from him—when he was nearing fifty or so—he met and married Maureen Harrigan and went to working an Ohio River farm. There he had proceeded to rear his eight young ones.

Joe was like the old man had been in his early days. When working the mule down in the river bottom, Joe would see the keelboats go by, headed downriver toward the west. Then he would think about how the old man, when hopped up on hard liquor, would go on about his days on the river. Joe would listen to the old man. And he learned by listening, for old Jim Shannon had been one of the best rivermen of them all in his day—and also one of the toughest. Of course that was before Mike Fink had got to fighting and keeling on a good sound basis. Old Jim claimed he had licked Mike once. That was probably the old Shannon bragging, or else it was when Mike was still young and undeveloped.

But wanting to be a keeler and being one were two different things. Joe was fourteen when he first told the old man he was going on the river. Jim Shannon had proceeded to whip the daylights out of his boy just to prove to the young 'un that he wasn't man enough yet to be out on his own. Jim only weighed one-fifty and stood five-six at that time. The following spring he had gained two inches and fifteen pounds. So he tried it again, and again the old man whipped him. That was when Joe started to clean up the whole neighborhood. He had learned things that way. Every man he fought had a little different style; Joe mastered the fine points of each and was careful to avoid their mistakes.

Then the spring when he was sixteen and had gained another two inches and fifteen pounds, he tried the old man again. That time Jim Shannon had a real tough fight. But old Jim was as tough as they came. He won; but for a week after, his body ached from the punishment Joe had inflicted.

So the next year when Joe stood slightly over six feet and weighed two hundred, the old man was whipped. Joe Shannon had won his freedom to go on the river. The only consolation the old man had was that he could still handle Timmy, the next in line. Timmy was a mite smaller than Joe.

"I suppose ye'll be leavin' naow," the old man said to Joe the day after their fight.

"Yep!" Joe said. "I've whupped everybody in these parts, so there's

no use'n me staying here longer. Guess I'll go on the river. And when I've licked Mike Fink, I'll head fer the Rocky Mountains."

"Don't you tackle Mike Fink yet," the old man warned him. "You've got some growin' to do first. Sure, but 'twould be good to get in Mike's crew of loparoos. I heard tell he's in Cincinnati naow."

"Then that's where I'm headin'," Joe said. "I want to see this here Fink."

And Joe left that very day, setting out along the riverbank. It proved he was not as bad off as the old man was that day after the fight. The old man had to rest all that day.

IT was a two-day walk to Cincinnati from the Shannon farm. Of course Joe could have made it quicker if he'd had a mind to. But he shot some squirrels along the way and fought one or two fellows in each settlement he came to, just to keep his hand in. But they were easy fights and plumb near disgusted Joe. He'd be glad to get to the riverfront where, so he'd heard, the rascals were big and rough.

Joe, being the fastest walker along the river, got to Cincinnati the middle of the second day. Fifty miles he had walked and this put him in the very best of shape. So when he got to Cincinnati he headed right for the riverfront.

You didn't have to be close to the riverfront to know there were keelers around. You could hear them about a mile off, just a-whooping it up. It is claimed that when a keelboat crew was in town everyone else stayed their distance. And I reckon that is true because keelers were about the roughest and toughest bunch of shenanigans that ever downed a quart of red-eye with one fiery gulp. This was Mike Fink's crew that was in town that day—and that is saying something. Mike Fink, king of all keelboatmen, which meant he could lick them all, had a collection of the toughest men on the river. If one of his crew lost a fight, Mike promptly fired him and hired the winner. But Mike didn't do much firing.

When Joe Shannon headed for the noisy waterfront, he met all sorts of tough-looking men, all heading *away* from the river. He stopped one of them.

"What fer," he asked, "is ever'one headed away from the river landing? Is it flood or fire?"

"Worse'n than either," the man answered. "Mike Fink's crew is whooping it up, and spoiling fer a fight."

That was all Joe wanted to know. He set his cap at a rakish angle, picked up his bundle, shoved the man out of his road, and headed for the riverfront at a fast clip. People hurrying up from the river looked at him and shook their heads and muttered sympathetic phrases about the poor young fellow who was about to get his head bashed in. But a good number of men, being fighters of a sort in their day, sized Joe up, and not wanting to miss anything like a riverfront fight, turned around and followed him, keeping at a safe distance, of course. It was not hard to tell when a man was spoiling for a fight—and Joe, they knew, was spoiling all over.

Mike Fink's crew had a barrel of whisky set down on the wharf near where the keelboat was tied up. They were drinking mugs of it, roaring outlandish songs and trying hard to stir up a mess. Now and then one of them would spy a big gent coming out of one of the waterfront places and would give chase. There were a couple of fights like that, but none of them at all satisfying. Mike Fink, towering over the most of them, was not at all happy. His men needed recreation. He figured he could find some for them here in Cincinnati, which was a tough town. But the trouble was, this here place was getting filled up with high and mighty people who didn't care nothing at all about fighting; Cincinnati was getting civilized. There hadn't been a decent fight yet and he was pulling out the next day, just as soon as his boat was loaded. The men needed that recreation. There was some tough, long pulls ahead of them.

Just then Burgy Meister taps Mike on the shoulder. "Lookit what's comin'!" he said gleefully.

Mike looked where Burgy was pointing and saw young Shannon for the first time. "Hooligan's daughter!" he exclaimed. "It's a ring-tailed roarer!"

Joe Shannon was whipping along like a sailor on a windy day, his long strides eating up the muddy street, head up like a rooster's, eyes held straight on the pack of howling and yowling keelers who, when they saw Joe coming, howled and yowled all the louder. This was more than they could ever hope for—someone who was actually spoiling for a fight.

The crowd following Joe stopped when the keelers roared out loud like that. Anyway they were now two hundred yards away and that was close enough, they figured. But Joe didn't even hesitate. He never felt happier in his life than when he was steaming up toward the keelers. While he was rapidly approaching them, he sized them up good. Never had he seen a more likelier bunch. Why, any one of them would give his old man a battle! And then Joe saw Mike Fink. He knew him at once from his old man's description. "He's a burly-chested ape with arms the size of a cow's belly and fists the size of her bag. He stands about like that river oak over there—big and straight, but a long way around." It was a good description. Joe slowed just a little—not from fear, but just because he wanted to size Mike up good. Also he wanted to think over what he was going to say. It was something he had built up in his mind, copying the way the old man did when he spoiled for a settlement fight.

MIKE FINK was standing there, arms akimbo, watching Joe Shannon coming straight toward him.

"I'd never believe it," Mike said. "He's actually a-spoilin'!"

"So he is," Burgy Meister agreed. "Here's where I have some fun." Burgy started forward to meet Joe. But Mike grabbed his shoulder and pulled him back.

Illustrated by Charles B. Falls

Mike Fink

"I'll handle this!" Mike roared. The rest of the keelers stopped howling and yowling then. There was a sudden stillness over the whole wharf, broken only by the plunk of Joe Shannon's clodhoppers which had reached the boards.

MIKE stands there waiting for Joe, and Joe comes right up to him.

"You Mike Fink?" Joe asks him, stopping about ten feet away.

"Who'd you think I was? Can't you tell Mike Fink when you see him?"

Joe threw his bundle down on the wharf. "You might be Sairey's grandmother, for all I know!" Joe looks Mike square in the eye.

This was the biggest jolt the keelers could have been given: This young squirt talking fresh to their leader, the keelboat king! They all started yowling again.

"Shet up!" Mike roared. There was instant silence.

Mike drained a jug of whisky. Then he said:

"Now, me hearty who talks so big: Tell me, did you git losted, and are ye lookin' fer your paw?"

Joe snorted. "I've whupped the old man," says he. "And I aint losted. I aint losted a fight since I've reached manhood. I'm aimin' to join your crew, Mike Fink. Point out your man and I'll prove my p'int."

Mike Fink smiled, a big wide smile. "That's talk, me hearty. I thought fer a minute you was goin' to tackle Mike Fink, but you didn't look quite *that* teched!"

"The old man says I should grow a mite first," Joe said honestly. "I aint scared none of no man that walks. But I want in your crew tolerable bad."

Burgy Meister, who'd been listening impatiently to this talk, jumped on top a barrel and thumped his chest. He crowed good and loud.

"I'm the man to fight this fight! I aint fought a lick fer two whole days. I'm spoiling fer action! *Yip!* Le'me tell you I'm an angered bear with a thirst fer blood. I usually fight two at a time and dance a jig all the while. All I need is room. Clear out, me hearties! Burgy's about to explode!"

Then Burgy jumped in the air, clicked his heels three times, lit, and picked up the barrel of whisky, tilting it and drinking steady all the while.

"He's a tough 'un," Mike Fink told Joe. "You want him or another?"

"He'll do," Joe said peeling off his shirt. "Just stand back. I'll flatten this striper and duck his head in that bar'l of red-eye skunk-juice. This here is Joe Shannon talkin'! I've whupped 'em all along the river; now I'm gonna commence whuppin' them that's *on* the river!"

Mike Fink was elated. This big youngster even knew how to talk a fight. This was just what his crew needed. He would make the most of it.

"Stand back!" he yelled to his keelers. They gave him space. Then Mike opened his lungs to the townsfolk gathered together some distance away. "Come on down here!" he yelled to them. "A first-class scrapin' match is about to commence!"

As afeared as the people were of Mike Fink, they came—because they didn't want to miss seeing the fight. And there was gambling blood in their veins. They liked nothing better than to bet on a fight.

Mike made a big circle on the wharf and told them to stay back of it. This was where the fighting would be done. So they circled all around the place and commenced making bets. Mike Fink, sitting on a barrel, ruled the roost.

Joe, stripped to the waist, presented a good picture of lithe muscles. His was a powerful build and he was graceful as a cat. Burgy opposite him, was a mite shorter, but at least twenty pounds heavier. He was thick from top to bottom. Tremendous strength made for him the lifting of a barrel of whisky a minor thing. And Burgy was wise in the ways of river fighting. He was an old and successful hand at it.

"Git at it!" Mike Fink yelled from his barrel. All the bets were made by that time. Very few of them were laid on Joe. The keelers were loyal to their man and few of the townspeople thought Joe had a chance.

BURGY let out a roar when Mike gave the word, and charged for Joe. Joe waited, then suddenly threw himself flat over to one side. Burgy hit Joe's legs and went flat on his face. Joe was on his feet in a flash, amidst a roar from the crowd. Burgy picked himself up, looking red both from the fall and the anger that surged through him. Joe didn't give him time to cool any. He sailed into Burgy, fists going like a war-party's paddles on the charge. Joe could hit like a mule could kick; all of his two hundred pounds was behind each blow. Burgy backed up, taking each blow solidly. Again there was a roar from the crowd. But Joe got a little too anxious. He thought he was hurting Burgy and maybe could knock him down and then tromp on him.

But not Burgy. The apelike man suddenly moved fast, faster than anybody could see. Next thing they knew he was behind Joe, had thrown one big arm around his neck, and tossed him sprawling through the air. Joe lit with a thump. It knocked the breath out of him. He bent over, trying to cough it up. Burgy came up behind him and gave him a side-spraddle kick square on the rump. Joe rolled over and over. The keelers yelled gleefully. They figured now Burgy would bloody up the young whelp.

Joe was still gasping for his breath when Burgy picked him up and held him over his head, spun him round and round, then tossed him clear. Joe lit at the feet of Mike Fink.

Mike knew what was troubling Joe. "Double up," he whispered, "and press your ribs." Joe did so, and soon he was breathing free and regular. He gave Mike a quick look of grati-

Joe let loose a hard right haymaker....Everything Joe had was in that blow.

tude, then jumped to his feet, just in time to escape Burgy.

Joe breathed good and deep for a spell while Burgy came catlike over to him. Joe thought fast. The best way to fight this man, he figured, was to stay clear of him. He'd have to grow a mite before he could bear-hug him. So when Burgy came up to him, Joe let loose with his fists again, then danced away gingerly. Each time Burgy came in to him, he did that. Every time Joe swung his fists he swung hard. His blows began to have effect. One eye of Burgy's became puffed, then closed. A couple of teeth got knocked out and he spat out some blood. The crowd enjoyed this. Never had they seen anyone so good with his fists as Joe was. They began cheering him.

All of this made Burgy very angry. He did not like this way of fighting. But he resorted to some clever tricks. He pretended to box, while managing to land some heavy blows which Joe almost staggered under. Then suddenly he changed his tactics and dived for Joe's legs. He upended Joe neatly; then, keeping hold of his legs, began spinning him round and round. He let loose and Joe went flying; he lit square onto the whisky-barrel and knocked it over. There was a mad scramble among the keelers to save the whisky. In the excitement Burgy Meister got hold of Joe and was bear-hugging him. Never had Joe Shannon been in such a tough spot. Burgy, his big arms locked around the youngster's, squeezed with all his powerful strength, trying to break Joe's ribs. Joe felt like he was in a vise that was being slowly tightened. He could not breathe at all. Joe was desperate. He began dancing around. Suddenly an idea struck him. He raised both his knees as high as he could, then brought both his heavy clodhoppers down on Burgy's feet. Burgy Meister had corns. He let out a yelp of pain and let Joe loose to nurse his sore feet. Joe backed away, then let loose a hard right haymaker. He caught Burgy doubled up. Everything Joe had was in that blow. He knocked Burgy flat on his back. And then with the crowd roaring, Joe jumped like greased lightning on top of Burgy and planted his clods—one, two—under the heavy man's chin.

THEN Joe fetched him up sitting, cracked him again with his right hand. Burgy wilted. With the crowd roaring and Burgy bleeding all around the mouth, Joe picked him up over his head, held him a moment, carried him to the whisky-barrel and lowered his head into it. It brought Burgy around and he came up sputtering. Dimly he saw Joe and came toward him, big arms flailing. Joe waited, stepped aside gingerly, then let Burgy have it on the kisser. Burgy went down and out. Joe had won his fight.

There was a loud roar and Joe was hoisted up on the shoulders of a big keeler. They were loudly shouting his praises. He was their man now. He was their champion. And there were those in the crew who had not liked Burgy Meister; these were glad Joe had won.

Mike Fink was pleased with the way the fight had turned out. He was glad Joe Shannon had won. The crew could spend the rest of the night celebrating and toasting the new crew member. And that boy Shannon—he was going to make a real keeler, a right proud addition to this crew of rip-snorting hellcats!

Mike, eying the celebrating crowd of keelers and townspeople, noticed that Joe Shannon was not even taking part in the celebrating. Just then he was over at one side putting on his shirt. Mike grabbed a jug of whisky and went over to him.

"You loparoo!" Mike roared. "You aint even begun to git drunk yit!" And Mike shoved the jug toward Joe.

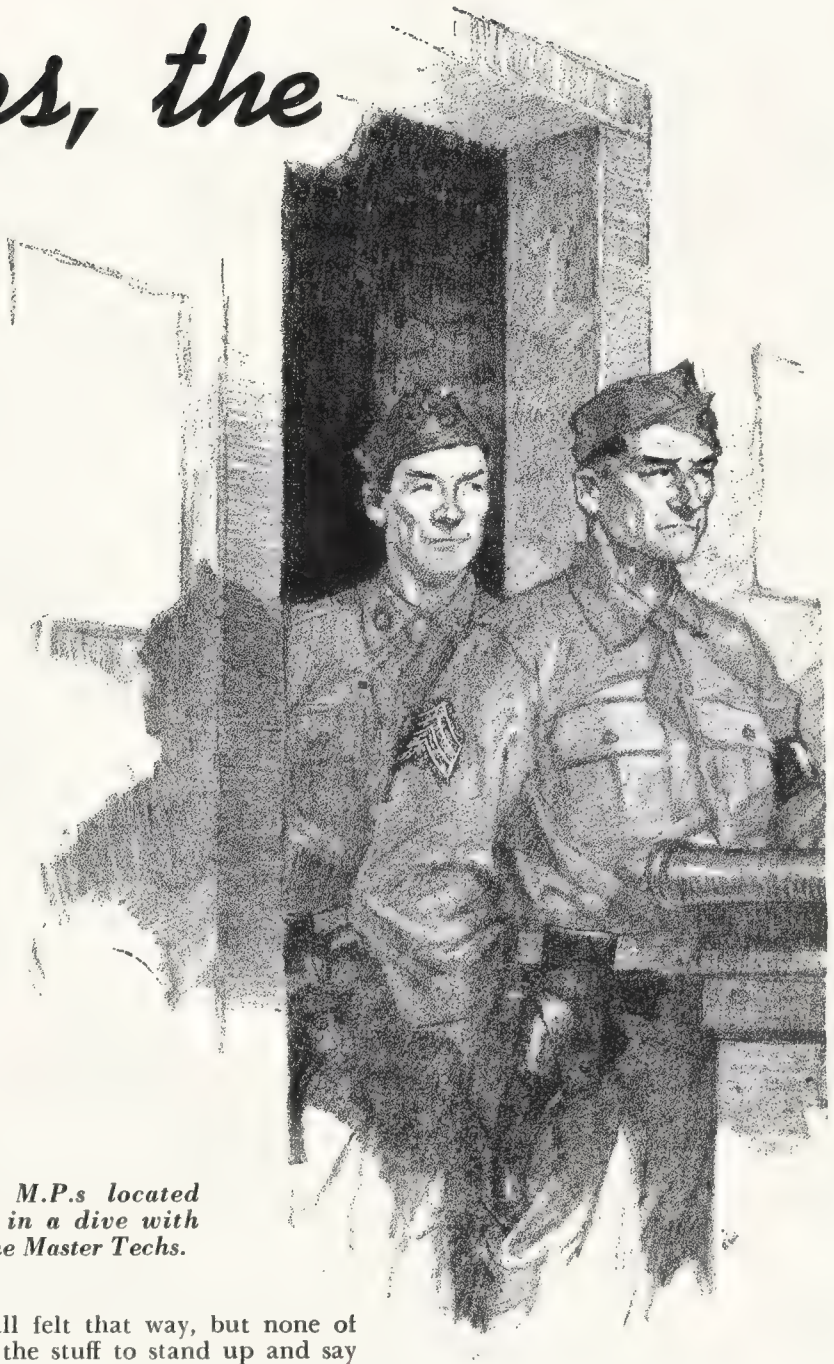
Joe knocked the jug aside. "No, you don't, Mike Fink!" he said. "That's not fer me. The old man says I should grow a mite afore I begin teching that stuff. Red-eye, he says, is not fer young'uns. Jest plain applejack will do!"

So applejack it was. Applejack nine years old, which was sort of mild but warm enough to make Joe, after he had drunk a gallon, dance a lively jig for the crowd of celebrators. And it was agreed all around that Joe Shannon was a ring-tailed roarer!

The Ships, the

He was an able soldier and a character plus, with his own ideas about glory, speeches and decorations.

by Lt. ELIHU ROBINSON



The M.P.s located him in a dive with some Master Techs.

WE came back from the operation in March, every man of us bleary-eyed and twenty pounds lighter, and settled down in camp to a week of playing ball, catching up on correspondence, and simply sacking out. The field musics sounded nothing worse than chow-bumps and church-call, both of which, I can assure you, got heavy attendance.

On the fourth day, the old man called us into the officers' mess.

"All right, gentlemen," he said. "Here's the scoop on decorations. Each platoon leader will have ten bronze stars to award, and one silver star. You can start writing up citations."

Warrant Officer Wilson got to his feet. "Ten, Colonel?" he asked. "Why, dammit, suppose I've got twelve—or twenty—boys who rate it?"

"Sorry, Gunner," replied the old man. "Division has set that as an arbitrary figure. I'm afraid there's nothing we can do."

So we all started looking up the forms and wordings of citations, remembering those thirty life-forsaken days, and weighing shades of heroism.

But two days later there was another battalion meeting. "Gentlemen," said the Colonel, "there's been a change of policy. We are now restricted to five bronze stars per platoon."

Without raising his hand to be recognized, Wilson stood up. "What the hell are those knuckleheads trying to do?" he raged. "How can I hand out five bronze stars when every damn' one of my boys deserves one?"

"I realize that, Wilson," soothed the Colonel, "but I'm afraid there's nothing to be done."

"Then to hell with it," said Wilson. "Those rear echelon Division babies are so busy pasting Navy Crosses on one another that they're using up the supply of metal."

We all felt that way, but none of us had the stuff to stand up and say so. After twenty-one years in the Corps, Wilson feared nobody. Once Major-General Wagner had paid our mess a visit—this was before the operation. Wilson was seated at a table, high as a kite.

"Hello, General," he bellowed.

"Hello, Gunner," smiled the General. "How are you?"

"Fine," replied Wilson, "only I got a bit of a cold."

We all stood pop-eyed, as decorous junior officers.

"Doing anything for it?" asked the General.

"Sure," said Wilson, "I'm drinking all the damn' whisky I can find."

But he set the pace for us on this decoration business. No citations, we felt—no injustice. We went on tacit strike. I guess the old man saw our point.

But three weeks later came word that Wilson himself was to receive the Navy Cross. For this there was entire approval. Wilson had gone in on D-day, and for thirty days thereafter had been a one-man spearhead for our Engineer Battalion. He had cleared mine fields up ahead of the infantry. He had operated bulldozers personally when operators were wounded by fire. He had blown caves and flushed out snipers. He was anywhere and everywhere over that island. One evening a staff officer had come crawling up to where Wilson sat next to his foxhole.

"How is it?" he asked.

Planes and the Guns

Illustrated by Raymond Sisley

Warrant Officer Wilson hated staff officers above all.

"See for yourself," he grunted.

"How much farther ahead is our front line?" whispered the brass hat.

"Our front line lies approximately twenty yards behind you," said Wilson magnificently.

"My God!" breathed the other; he turned on his belly and crawled back fast.

So you can see that when word reached us that Wilson was up for the Navy Cross, there was recession from our bad feelings on decorations. Some of us started work on our own recommendations again.

Finally our adjutant received the citation. He almost had a fit. He read it to us in his office: *"While serving with the Engineer Battalion on Feb. 9, 1945, while under heavy enemy artillery, mortar, and small-arms fire, Warrant Officer Wilson did expose himself and at risk of his life did dig out from a captured pillbox serving as a command post, Cmdr. Palmer, U.S.N. (M.C.) Division surgeon, when said pillbox was hit by an enemy artillery shell. This action thereby saving the life of Cmdr. Palmer. . ."*

We gasped! Dolled up in that verbiage, we hardly recognized the incident. Wilson was sacking out in his foxhole for one of the few nights he got any sleep. A stray shell fell nearby, and Wilson called out in that di-

rection for an answer. None forthcoming, he had crawled five yards and pushed aside debris and pulled this body from under. He never found out till later whom he had rescued.

Accordingly, one day the battalion was called out in khaki, and after one dry run, the Navy Cross was pinned on the shirt of Warrant Officer Stephen T. Wilson for the least hazardous of his exploits in action.

That night everybody got roaring drunk. . . .

This was only the beginning. Three days later, orders arrived to take Steve back to the States "for assignment in connection with public relations affairs." We threw another party, and bade him farewell.

The rest of the story came back to us in dribs and drabs from replacements who later joined us, and from letters of chaps who were Stateside at the time.

WILSON flew from our island. At Pearl Harbor, he had to change planes and had a day's stop-over. He reported in to the transportation office, had his orders processed—and then disappeared. When some bigwig expressed the desire to speak with him, NCO's were dispatched all over the Yard to locate him. He was not in his quarters. Knowing his reputation, they first tried the Navy and Marine Clubs. That failing, they phoned all the organizations that had wine messes. Still it was fruitless. They sent M.P. roving patrols to all the hotels still run by civilians. They tried every logical spot on Oahu.

And the next day just as they were about to give him up, they located him in a dive on Beretania Street in Honolulu, completely looped; he was conversing with some Master Techs whom he had known when on China duty.

With relief, they finally hoisted him aboard a San Francisco-bound plane.

In San Francisco, almost the same thing occurred.

He was met at Alameda Airport. "Are you Gunner Wilson?" asked an officer, who had come running out to the side of the plane.

Wilson acknowledged his identity.

"I'm Major Cory of Public Relations."

"Pleased to meet you," scowled Wilson.

"Welcome back to the United States."

Wilson looked around. "It hasn't changed much."

"Wait till you try to get a steak," quipped the Major.

Wilson hopped down from the plane, ignoring the ladder. "Let's get to Department of Pacific. I'll want to shove right off for Iowa."

They got into a station-wagon and wheeled along the bay.

"How does it look to you?" asked the Major, referring to the sights and traffic.

"Looks all right," grunted Wilson. "Thirty days'll about do me, though."

"May I congratulate you? We've all heard about your exploits—if I may touch upon the subject?"

Wilson's eyes fell upon the Major's shoulders.

"Tell me, Major,"—he leaned forward,—"do you mean to say you've got up as high as you have, without having been overseas?"

The Major was silent for the rest of the trip.

"Yep," said Wilson, as they arrived at Harrison Street, "as soon as they can get me plane or train reservations, thirty days'll look pretty fine. Do you think they can get me out of here today?"

"Today?" smiled the Major. "What about the Bond Rally tonight?"

"Bond Rally?" repeated Wilson.

"Why, yes," said the Major. "I thought they—ah—acquainted you with all that. You speak here tonight in San Francisco, tomorrow in Los Angeles; then you go on to Washington and the East Coast, via St. Louis and Chicago."

"I—what?" exploded Wilson. "Like hell I do! I'm going back to Iowa for thirty days of fishing and lying around—and then I'm going back out."

"We'll see," smirked the Major.

They were polite at Department of Pacific—but firm. They had reservations at the Hotel Fairmount for him and then he would speak at rallies that evening at several locations in the city.

"Is this what they brought me back for?" he asked at last.

"Afraid it is," said the Colonel—a full Colonel.

"God damn!" said Wilson.

"We'll see you to your hotel. You'll be picked up by Public Relations people tonight at seven. Incidentally, do you have a set of greens?"

"No," admitted Wilson.

"Well, we'll drop you by a tailor. They'll alter while you wait. Do you have relatives or friends in town?"

"No."

"Well, how about having dinner with me?" The Colonel smiled. "I know an excellent bar and grill."

"Sure," said Wilson.

They went to the tailor's—then, dressed for Stateside pleasures, they went to the bar.

"Colonel," said Wilson, after the fifth bourbon, "why do they do this? Why can't they just give a man his leave and let him go? Give him his thirty days—that's what he wants."

"Don't know," said the Colonel, shaking his head.

"Colonel," said Wilson, after the third Scotch, "who runs these things? Sure, I wanted to come back. Wanted to forget those God-forsaken islands for thirty days."

"Dunno," said the Colonel.

"Colonel," said Wilson, after the second rum, "maybe you think it's funny, me wanting to go back out again. But I got to; I belong there. I got to see this thing over."

"Over," nodded the Colonel.

Three refills later, Wilson glanced at his watch. "Colonel, we got to be going. Those P.R. characters will be picking me up in two and a half minutes. We better go."

"Cast off!" said the Colonel. "Good hunting, boy!"

An hour later, they put Wilson on a platform, to deafening applause.

Major Cory had wanted him to memorize a speech, but he would have nothing to do with that. Speaking never fazed him. He could read off a senior officer many ranks above and get away with it. These were merely civilians.

In brief sentences, he told the audience about their sons and husbands and sweethearts. Pungently, because he had lived through it, he gave them the sights and smell of battle. He told of incidents like that which had befallen two of his boys out blowing caves in a "secured" area. Suddenly high above them on a terrace, in open view, had appeared a Jap. Such was their surprise that they let him disappear without aiming a shot at him. But from there on they were more vigilant. That evening in a foxhole which they shared, they observed a figure approaching from the beach. One of the boys sprang to his rifle and fired. The figure collapsed. The other boy knew his buddy had shot a Marine—who else would be in that area at that time?—and he knew how the other would take it when he eventually found out. So he squeezed off a round himself, so that both would have made the same mistake.

All the next morning they avoided the spot; but some later mission took them by the place. The body was still sprawled there. Some inner compulsion forced them, against their will, to turn the body over. The uniform was that of a Marine, complete with helmet and M-1, but the buck-toothed face was Japanese.

THE crowd loved it—this sharp drawing of the hairline between life and death. Time after time, as he stepped back to sit down, the applause ran so high in volume that he was forced to come back to the mike.

"Say something about war bonds!" hissed the Major. "Bonds! Tell 'em how much their purchase means to the boys out there."

"Oh, yes," said Wilson. "About those war bonds— Buy the damn' things, if you want to. I don't care."

The Major's face turned pale, then purple. The crowd cheered and cheered. Wilson sat down firmly.

"My God! My God!" moaned the Major, his head in his hands.

BUT the oddest thing was that audience. When they realized Wilson would speak no longer and they started to filter out—instead of dispersing homeward by car and trolley, they halted their movement in the lobby. There they clustered in quiet groups about the bond counters, waiting patiently to be served. A frantic call went out for extra clerks. They were kept busy for an hour and a half. It was amazing! Without any talk of patriotic duty, without mention of compound-interest values, these people bought bonds to the extent of over $275,000.

It was like that at each of the five rallies: $195,000 at the second; $310,000 at the next; $95,000 at the last. (They had waited until 12:45 A.M.) San Francisco had never seen anything like it.

From there, Wilson went to Los Angeles, to Bakersfield and to San Diego.

After San Diego, Wilson asked, "When do I get home?"

"Soon," they assured him.

As the train carried him eastward, huge groups assembled at Reno, at Council Bluffs, at Chicago, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia. Everywhere it was the same—a stupendous success. The papers were full of it. Public Relations sat back like a well-fed cat.

Again after Philly, Wilson asked, more impatiently, "How about it? How about my leave? Haven't I done enough?"

Again they made evasive answer.

But the answer was really—and we must have caught the drift—that the more successful was the tour, the more remote were his chances of leave and of subsequently shipping out again.

In Boston, he told an audience: "Dammit, the whole Marine Corps will make the landings on Honshu. The Army will lace in; then the whole damn' thing will be over. And here I'll be trying to get you people to buy war bonds. When are you going to buy enough so they'll let me go back to my outfit?"

The audience roared and roared—sedate Boston!

In Washington, he was taken—very hush-hush—to the White House, and there the President rose from his desk to place around Wilson's neck the Congressional Medal of Honor. His true exploits had at last caught up with him on the wings of this coast-to-coast publicity. He was slated for a cover on a popular magazine.

That night he grew suddenly obdurate. It wasn't that the honors had gone to his head, but more that his

"Say something about bonds," hissed the Major. "Tell 'em how much their purchase means to the boys out there."

burning resentment was slowly coming to a boil.

"No more rallies," he said.

"Oh, yes," they said.

"I want to go to Iowa, then out again. It's time for me to get back out there."

"When this is over."

"It's over now," he said and got to his feet. "I'm through. No more speeches."

"Oh, yes! Tomorrow, New York, at the Polo Grounds—the biggest rally of all."

He uttered a word not printable.

"Oh, yes, Gunner Wilson, you will speak."

"*No!*"

"Orders," they said.

"O.K.," he answered, "but I'm warning you."

"No," they said, "*we're* warning *you!*"

So he went up to New York, quiet and abstracted. No drinking, no profanity. Not once did he take his eyes off the Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania countryside flashing by the windows.

"All right," he said at last, "I'll speak tonight."

"That's fine!" they approved.

He had no other words to say until they reached Pennsylvania Station, and then it was only necessary things, like: "I'll carry my own bags. . . . What hotel will we be at? . . What time is the rally?"

At the Polo Grounds that night, he moved to the microphone in the focus of a dozen spotlights. Thirty thousand people cheered.

"I am here tonight," he prefaced, "to tell you how much your bond purchases mean to the lads out there."

IT wasn't his usual beginning. He had never stressed this point before. Major Cory was pleased.

"I know," he continued, "for I've been out there. I've just come back and I can tell you how your loved ones out there in the muck and mire are praying tonight that you'll be buying bonds, so that they can receive the planes, the guns, and ships they need. They're cheerful out there. They *know* they can depend on you to back them up—to *back the attack!* Buy war bonds and speed V-J day! Bring 'em home with war bonds! Do not disappoint your boy tonight."

There it was—right off the air-waves and billboards and out of the magazines—all the high-pressure stuff. The unctuous sales conceptions that advertising executives had distilled from their vast experience.

And these thirty thousand who had thronged together to do him homage. How did they take it?

They took it as you might expect—as though he had hit them with a cold, wet blob. The counters closed that night with a total intake of $1,050.

Public Relations was stunned.

"What are you trying to do?" raged Major Cory. "Make us look ridiculous?"

"Me?" he said.

"This is an outrage," screamed the Major. "I'll put you on report!"

"Fine," he said.

They just couldn't handle him after that. Next night in Newark, he had a price-list of every article of ordnance matériel, and how many bonds were necessary to buy a 60-mm. mortar shell, a light machine-gun, a case of C-rations.

Wednesday, in Brooklyn, he proved the value of bonds on a dollars-and-cents basis—three will get you four."

Thursday, in Paterson, he drew a glowing picture of what the world of the future would look like, if you bought that *extra* war bond now!

On Friday they let him go. There was nothing else to do.

He grabbed the first train westward. Des Moines, his native town, took him to its arms. He had thirty glorious days amid old scenes and friends, before entraining again for California and embarkation.

But a strange thing happened, just before he left. At the railroad station he spoke a few words to the crowds who came down to see him off. After the train pulled away, the crowd slowly and soberly dispersed.

The next day was the biggest day in the history of war-loan purchases in the Des Moines area—bigger than the First or Fifth or Seventh drives. The regional board couldn't explain it. And when they finally got their wits and facts together, it was too late. . . . . His ship was just then passing through the Golden Gate.

Nature's Noblemen

A Quiz by NAT McKELVEY

NATURE, it seems, has endowed each of the world's many peoples with at least one dominant character trait. As a potential post-war traveler, how many nationalities can you identify from the following character descriptions?

Each nationality listed in the column below at the right is described in the left column. Your job is to match them up correctly.

Score five for each right answer. From 85 to 95 is excellent; 70 to 80 is good; 55 to 65 is average.

1. He will give the shirt off his back.
2. To him, a penny saved is a penny earned.
3. He is a great imitator.
4. Sure, and this one is a jolly gent.
5. He stands erect, member of a dignified race.
6. The sun never sets on his self-confidence.
7. The patience of Confucius belongs to him.
8. A loaf of bread and a tent makes him happy.
9. Persecution has developed his stamina.
10. By yiminy! You can't rile this fellow.
11. His house is your house.
12. This hard-working fellow will never pass a bad check.
13. This one would drive a troika right to Berchtesgaden.
14. He is so clean a scouring agent bears his name.
15. *Mamma mia!* This one is a great artist.
16. He'll tell you straight from the shoulder.
17. This one plans everything to the last detail.
18. In the Casbah or at home, this fellow is a romanticist.
19. "Home, sweet home" is his theme song.
20. He doesn't believe that pride goes before a fall.

(a) Argentinian
(b) Russian
(c) Arab
(d) Hebrew
(e) Swede
(f) Italian
(g) American
(h) Dane
(i) Australian
(j) Japanese
(k) German
(l) Frenchman
(m) Chinese
(n) Indian
(o) Englishman
(p) Dutchman
(q) Irishman
(r) Czechoslovakian
(s) Mexican
(t) Scotchman

Answers

1 (g); 2 (t); 3 (j); 4 (q); 5 (n); 6 (o); 7 (m); 8 (c); 9 (d); 10 (e); 11 (s); 12 (r); 13 (b); 14 (p); 15 (f); 16 (i); 17 (k); 18 (l); 19 (h); 20 (a).

HIGH IRON

A novel of the railroad builders when the West was young

by Frank Bonham

Who wrote "The Magnificent Gringo" and "Bonanza Railroad."

HIGH in the Sierra Nevadas, where the magnificent shoulders of the Donner Pass hold up the sky, there is a tie-siding with the cryptic name of "BARBARA BLY." There is nothing pretentious about this siding—a few ranks of ties, a gravel pile, and some blackened planks torn off a snowshed. Hardly the kind of thing a girl would want to give her name to, unless she happened to be a very unusual girl.

Barbara Bly was.

You could have asked John Duff about this, and the way he would have evaded the question, while his color gave him away, would have told you considerable. He would have remarked that any girl who had spent all her life in railroad camps was bound to be unusual. She could talk railroading like a hogger. She could walk through a gang of rough Irish track-laborers, and not a man of them would have dared smile, unless she smiled first—which, however, she generally did.

At the time the railroad marker bearing her name was installed, she was nineteen years old, had chestnut hair, gray eyes, and a figure as trim as that of any of the little wood-burners on the Central Pacific Railroad, which her father was helping to build. Her real name, as a matter of fact, was Barbara Carney. Barbara Bly was the name she gave herself when she deserted the railroad for the stage.

Yes, deserted. The daughter of an Irish railroad engineer deserting the iron! It caused something of a scandal in the trade. And what it caused in the heart of Johnny Duff was a sad thing indeed.

But maybe it was his own fault. Maybe, if he had handled her differently the day the accident happened at Bloomer Cut, she would have given a shake of the head to the stage, instead of a nod. But there was no doubt that it would have meant a compromise with the railroad; and Johnny's love of the iron was something just short of worship.

Those were the days when men all over the country were just beginning to realize there was something pretty grand about the business of railroading. Grown men wiped locomotives for ten cents an hour, and thought it worth while just for the chance to get into the cab now and again. Firemen decked themselves out between runs like Louisville steamboat mates. Engineers—well, it seemed as if nobody could do quite enough for them.

Johnny Duff was in the construction end of the trade. On the Central Pacific books he was down as Assistant Superintendent, Charge of Construction—and don't ask how a young buck in his twenties landed a job like *that!* Only Johnny and a few others knew just how it had come about.

The point was, he had it. And he wasn't going to let it slide even for Babbie. Maybe that sounds stubborn. Yet it isn't fair to make snap judgments. They had their reasons, both of them. In a way, her leaving the road was the only thing she could have done.

This, if you are interested, is the story of Babbie Carney and Johnny Duff.

Johnny Duff swung from the mess-car into the damp chill of the right-of-way. He stood in the darkness a moment, smelling the weather. Clouds had been gathering for days; and now, in the cold pre-dawn, the air was wet with mist. Down the tracks the morning supply-train shouted her arrival; there was rain in the sound of the whistle.

He walked down to the Chief Engineer's car, fastening the frogs of his coat. Over the stir of workers and wagon teams, he now could hear the locomotive pulling through Sailor's Ravine: puff-and-clank, puff-and-clank-and-wheeze. Her great yellow eye bobbled into view, raked the hillside with light, and bore suddenly upon the camp at Newcastle Trestle.

In the murky wash of the headlight, gang foremen moved about on horseback, assembling sleepy crews. Wagons and teams jostled each other along the right-of-way. Inside the telegraph-car, the key was already awake; through the window Johnny saw the operator, his head propped on one hand, taking down a message. There were lights in the other cars too, the boarding-cars where late risers were tumbling out of bunks; in the engineers' car and the offices. Over there in the grayness, fifteen hundred Chinese were trotting from their ramshackle tent city.

Johnny put his foot on the iron ladder of Chief Engineer Carney's rolling home and swung up. Ed Carney was finishing his coffee; and Babbie, at the stove, had her back to him. She wore a dish-towel apron, and her chestnut hair was pinned high in a pre-breakfast coiffure.

Johnny said: "Let's pick her up, Ed!"

Babbie glanced at him over her shoulder. "He hasn't finished his breakfast yet," she said. "Sit down and have some coffee." She had on her pre-breakfast voice, too: crisp as bacon.

Johnny got a cup, and Babbie poured coffee with one hand while with the other she kept the skillet tilted so that the egg bubbled in deep fat. The lamp, on a shelf over the stove, brushed her cheek with warm magic. Her

"You're no daughter of the iron!" Ed declared. "Splurgin' about looking like a bit of Dresden china!" And

face was almost thin, the lines of it well defined. Her nose was short, with a tilt; and the eyes Johnny looked down on were gray, though now he could see nothing of them but the long dark lashes.

Those eyes didn't bother with Johnny Duff much, anyway, Johnny being railroad to the core, and Babbie Carney being a rebel from the good life of dust and iron. All she could do, her old man being in the trade, was to run it down; but at that, she fought a pretty good war from the shanty-car.

Johnny stood by the door to drink his coffee. Once the morning supply-train had shunted in, he was on springs; he could never sit down until dark. Pay-roll Section listed him as *Duff, John J., Assistant Superintendent, Charge of Construction.* He was field-marshal, battering-ram, and crying-shoulder for the Central Pacific Railroad; therefore his office was wherever powder blasted, sledges sang, and locating crews dragged their chains. It was as good a way as any of growing old—only, the gray came a little faster.

"How many rail-cars came up?" Ed asked him.

"Couldn't tell. If they don't start sending up some powder, you won't need rails, anyway. We'll be chipping at Bloomer Hill with pocket-knives in another week. The cut hadn't moved three feet when I left yesterday."

With a fork, Ed attacked the egg Babbie placed before him. "And what are you going to do about Kearns and McKewen?" he demanded. "They haven't been cold sober in a month. Every night they take off for Hedenburg's store as soon as it's dark. They get back about time for work. But Kearns is the best rail-setter you've got, and you don't find telegraphers like McKewen twice in a year."

"I'll keep them until I have to can them," Johnny said. "Sometimes I think we'd be smart to put in a sutler's store and sell beer. It might keep them out of hog-ranches like Hedenburg's. If it was only the two of them, I wouldn't worry. But Hedenburg's is getting to be a habit."

"Beer won't hold those boys," Ed declared. "If there's whisky within ten miles, they'll have it."

Babbie walked to the table with a cup of coffee. She sat down and cupped her hands about it. "To hear you two talk, you'd think trouble was new to this business. I don't remember a job yet where Pop didn't fall off a trestle, have a strike, or lose his eyebrows fourteen times in explosions." Babbie could tell you all about railroad life; she had lived nineteen of her twenty years in box-cars.

Suddenly she sprang up. "Heavens, your toast!"

Ed's chair scraped. "Put it in a bread pudding for me. We've got to unload those flats." Ed was in his fifties, big and ruddy in the Irish way. There were two deep ruts between his eyes. His hair was getting thin,

Johnny asked: "What act of God do we thank for this?"

except for a reddish brush in the center; and his skin, soft as a baby's, never stopped peeling.

Babbie turned back from the stove. She shook back a strand of hair that fell across her forehead. "That's three days in a row," she told her father. "You promised when you took this job, you wouldn't go back to eating like a tie-bucker."

Ed kissed her on the cheek. "I'll make up for it tonight. That supply-train's been early every day this week."

They jumped down. Babbie, hands on hips, stood in the doorway and watched Ed button his jacket. She said, so coolly you might have missed the irony in those gray eyes: "They tell me there's a place over the hill where the day doesn't start when a whistle blows, and you can hang out a wash and it isn't gray with train-smoke by noon. You can even plant potatoes, and know you'll still be there to dig them. Of course, any railroad woman would say you had to die to find a place like that. But one of these days I'm going to start walking, and see if I can find it!"

The door banged. Ed laughed. "The kid's about got herself convinced she don't like railroading. Some day I'll park her in a hotel when I go out on a job. She'll find out how much she don't like it."

Johnny did not comment. He knew how real was this distaste of Babbie's for railroading. He only wished he could have known earlier how she felt. But all he could see, at first, when Ed came to the job after two other engineers had bungled it, was the way she fitted into the life. She had taken over the slatternly box-car and created a little cosmos of civilization in the dirt and clamor of the camp.

She was an efficient, novel, and amazingly pretty element in his life. Johnny never had a chance. Before she knew him well enough to open up on railroading, his eyes were following her around, and he underwent an acute high blood-pressure whenever he watched her walk up the grade toward him, bare-legged, high-breasted, with the beauty and clean grace of a doe. And her voice: When she sang, all the nervous energy that was forever churning around in him was quiet, and for a little while it lay still and purred.

Gradually, he found out that the only part of her life she wanted to remember or talk about were the winters in a Boston school, where she'd studied subjects like French and algebra and singing. He learned these things in time to keep from making a fool of himself, but not in time to do his heart any good. Johnny Duff, who was used to trouble, added one more headache to his list.

In the cold mist, Johnny and Ed hurried down to the supply string, where sparks swirled upward from the big diamond stack. Foremen were already checking in their supplies and turning them over to skinners. Johnny got a wagon and walked down to the powder-car. About half the black powder he requisitioned was coming through. At Bloomer Cut, work was almost stalled. The men known as Big Four, backers of the road, cried because the C. P. hadn't tapped the rich traffic of the gold-fields; yet they cut supplies and wages every month.

Johnny ran the door open, respectfully. That door was faced with sheet-iron and edged with India rubber. He knew at a glance that he had been shorted again. He checked the kegs out, and found only sixty. Sixty kegs to feed into holes that cried for a hundred!

He sent the powder-wagon on up the grade; it was three miles to the camp at Bloomer Cut. He shouldered back up the tracks, through the tangle of horses, wagons and workmen. Johnny Duff was tall—too tall for his weight, so that his arms and legs had a long, loose-coupled action. Around his eyes were the fine lines that come early to men who work in the open. His forehead, where his hat shaded it, was fair; but below that, every inch of his exposed skin had the hue of the red-brown California earth.

CHINESE WERE CARRYING rails and fittings from flat-cars to wagons, to be carried around the camp train, which blocked the tracks, to the grade up ahead. A couple of engineers stood with Ed. One had a roll of blueprints under his arm.

Johnny showed Ed the tally.

"I'm going up and have a talk with Huling," he said. "It's about time I got his figures on just how much he needs to finish the cut. Then I'm going down and fight for it."

Ed grunted. "For all the good it will do you! All those boys down in Sacramento really want is to scatter ties and iron along a right-of-way and collect the subsidies."

Johnny saddled his horse, and in the growing daylight rode down the ravine, under the trestle that was so new the timber-ends were still varnished with pitch. He ascended again to the right-of-way and rode along the trackless red path grooved into hillside, passing through pear orchards and oak groves and the first scattered pines.

The Big Four, he thought grudgingly, were not quite so black as Ed and the rest of California painted them. They were scroungers; they were pirates of finance. But they had courage.

He remembered how they had scrimped two years ago to find fifty thousand dollars to back Theodore Judah, a railroad engineer from the East with a wild dream of building a railroad across the Sierras to meet the Union Pacific somewhere on the plains. They were just four Sacramento merchants then—Collis P. Huntington, Mark Hopkins, Charles Crocker and Leland Stanford; purveyors, variously, of hardware, dry goods, and groceries. And more than once, Johnny Duff knew, their assets as railroad czars had fallen far short of what they had owned as merchants.

Johnny himself came in for criticism frequently. What was a man of his age doing as assistant superintendent of a railroad construction crew? This was a point the Big Four never discussed. They kept him because they had to. They kept him because nobody but Johnny Duff knew how the Central Pacific was going to get across the snag-toothed Sierra Nevadas. Nobody!

There were the kind of mountains, like clods dumped out of a sack, over which you didn't just start building in a general direction, as a good engineer could almost do in the East. Johnny had been in Theodore Judah's surveying crew when he was searching for some route a railroad could conceivably follow in crossing the mountains. The nation was just becoming interested in a Pacific railroad. In the two years Judah surveyed, trying this pass and that, dragging rod and chain from sea-level to nine thousand feet before he found the only possible route, Johnny was the only man who stuck with him. When Judah talked railroad, Johnny forgot all about salary.

But Judah died, with the railroad barely started; and on his death the amazing discovery was made that he hadn't left any maps. He had either destroyed them or never made any. He simply knew where the road was going. So did Johnny.

It gave him a club he was not slow to use. Judah's fear had been that the Huntington crowd would cut costs until they had a jerry-built road that nothing but a handcar could ever run on. Johnny made them coax him, chiefly with a written agreement to build according to Judah's specifications.

In the end, Johnny Duff agreed to swing the sledge if they would hold the spike steady.

Chapter Two

THE ceiling of gray mist was slow to break up. Through the pressed-down atmosphere rolled the heavy throb of a black-powder blast. Digory Huling, Johnny's boss powder-monkey, had his men out early. Digory was a Cornishman, the best powder-man Johnny had ever known, whom he had stolen from the hardrock mines a few months ago. From the sound of it this morning, he was trying to tear the top off Bloomer Hill with one shot.

But it was not until Johnny Duff saw the workman running down the grade toward him that he knew he had just heard the heavy tread of disaster.

The workman ran up close to the horse so that it began to rear. Johnny controlled it, while the Chinese gestured up the hill, screaming: *"Clave-im! Clave-im!"* A cut on the man's cheek mixed blood and dust. There was powdery earth in his hair and clothing.

Johnny had to raise his hand to stop the rush of chopped Cantonese. He wrote on a pad from his hip pocket: *"Accident at Bloomer Cut. Send shovels and doctor."* He sent the Oriental on down the line with the message.

He found the camp of forty Chinese wildly astir. For shelter, tents had been pitched within the narrow slot their drills, double-jacks and black-powder had blasted into the tough meat of Bloomer Hill. The walls of the cut, rising eighty feet above grade level, showed why every foot of the advance at this section had been shot: Under a thick hide of shale, the hill was solid rock and conglomerate. Half the tents appeared to have been buried beneath the slide. Twenty or thirty Chinese were moving boulders, shoveling, clawing at loose earth with their bare hands.

Johnny found Colbeck, the clerk, the only white man in camp besides Digory, attempting to move a stone with a bar. Johnny got on the bar with him.

"He's caught it for sure, Mr. Duff!" Colbeck panted. "Him and about ten others! I don't know what the hell happened. A spark must have fallen in a powder keg while we were eating."

Three men had already been dragged out and now sat against the cut-wall near the breakfast fire. They held handleless tea bowls in their hands, stunned but not badly hurt. It might be another story with those under the deeper angle of the talus. Johnny grabbed a shovel and went to work as soon as the stone was moved.

A FEW MINUTES LATER a hand was uncovered. It began to clutch wildly as other hands scooped the rubble away. A Chinese, half suffocated, was unearthed. Johnny's heart tightened. In a few more minutes they could hope to find nothing but bodies under the slide!

It was his own shovel which struck the mining brogan. With that two-and-a-half-inch sole, whose foot but Digory's could be inside it? He shouted, and other men came to help him. But the Cornishman lay loose-limbed on the ground when he was pulled out. They carried him to the fire.

Johnny washed the dirt out of his mouth and nose. He looked small, like an injured child, for he was not a large man, except in breadth of shoulder. He cut his own hair, running the clippers straight up the back and sides, a vigorous little man whose pride was the golden belt-buckle he had won in some wrestling bout in the old country.

Faintly, when he bent over him, Johnny could hear a light breath. He started rubbing his wrists. One of the Chinese knelt to pinch Digory's nostrils and breathe into his mouth, forcing the air into his body with the bellows of his own lungs. Digory coughed, opened wild eyes, and began to fight.

Johnny was giddy with relief. He took his first deep breath in twenty minutes. A workman brought a bowl of China tea. Digory drank, spat, and began to curse, the rich profanity of the Cornish tin-miner. Ed Carney and a dozen other men rode in. Shovels and bare hands attacked the slide, but it was an hour before the last workman was taken out.

It did not go so well with some of them as it had with Digory. There were broken bones and cuts. Two of the Chinese were dead when they were taken out.

After the casualties were on their way down the grade, Johnny began to ask questions.

"Hit come," Digory stated, "just as we were eatin'. I've been leavin' four or five kegs atawp the cut for splittin' breast-'oles. Domned if a spark didn't set off the works!"

They started up the hill. The switchbacking trail lifted them to where a small area had been hacked clear of brush. Here the powder had been stored. The clearing was now a pit that funneled into the cut; when the shot went off, a slide of dirt and rocks had been started that poured down the rock wall like ore from a loading bin.

Standing there at the edge of the slot, Johnny looked down on the camp. The tents were being put up again. The fire had been re-started. Imperturbable workmen,

used to accidents and tragedy, returned to their parsimonious breakfast of dried cuttlefish, rice and tea. It occurred to Johnny that eighty feet was a long way for a live spark to ride; there wasn't a sign of a spark now. He asked if the kegs had been covered.

"With rain threaten'," said the Cornishman indignantly, "would I be leavin' them out to soak?" Then he saw what was in Johnny's mind. He took his gaze frowningly back to the hole left by the blast. "'Tis a long way up, at that! And coom to think of it, why didn't the shot go straight up? There was nothing to send it down—no tampin'—"

A tiny scrap of red paper caught Johnny's eye. He picked it up, and they all looked at it, Digory and Ed and Colbeck, the clerk. All of them had worked with powder enough to recognize the scrap of paper torn from a dynamite cap. They all knew, too, that caps were used with dynamite or nitro-glycerine; but the Central Pacific was using black powder . . . .

Digory was remembering out loud, while his calloused palm slowly rubbed the golden belt-buckle. "A couple of fellows been goin' by here near every morning, drunk to the heyes. This morning they stopped and wanted coffee. I'll say they needed it, Mester Duff! I gave them a pot, and they drunk it and went on down the grade. It wasn't long after that, that the rocks begun to fall."

Ed said: "Kearns and McKewen!"

Johnny's mind went slowly and carefully. "Maybe," he said. "Maybe not. Put your men to work cleaning up, Digory. Don't say anything about this. We don't want any excitement until we're sure."

He and Ed were the only ones with horses, the other horsemen having gone back with the injured. While the men returned to work, they began to look for sign. But the freight trail passing near the cut bore the impression of hundreds of horse- and mule-tracks. They split up, to check the road in both directions.

Johnny rode west, toward the main work-camp. The freight road twisted in and out of tall manzanita jungles, passed through a sparse grove of second-growth pines, and traversed a pear orchard on a hillside.

Kearns and McKewen had only a corner of his thoughts. He was thinking about Ben Hedenburg, who ran the store and saloon on the Auburn and Nevada stage road, where Kearns and McKewen and too many other workmen spent their evenings. Liquor was cheap and plentiful at Hedenburg's; the big sutler would always carry a man till pay-day. But liquor was not all he sold: You could buy mining supplies there too—pans and rockers, dynamite and caps. Johnny was wondering if Ben Hedenburg had realized what the men intended to do with their powder when he sold it.

FROM THE MEDLEY of tracks in the deep road-dust, a file of bootprints struck off into the orchard. Johnny sat straight on the saddle, his feet thrusting against the stirrups, searching through the columns of black trunks and bare branches now frosted with white pear-blossoms. Petals were scattered on the ground. Where the boots of this man had pressed, the petals were crushed into the earth.

He left the road and saw, a hundred yards away, the flash of a plaid shirt. He spurred the horse. "Hold up!" he shouted. Then he recognized the broad back and thick neck, overgrown with red hair, of Tim McKewen, the chief day telegrapher.

McKewen floundered on over the irrigation ruts. Johnny came alongside and sprang down with both feet in the middle of McKewen's back. There was no fight in the man when he came up. He was soddenly drunk; his underlip was moist, and his jaws were frowsed with a four-day beard. His tongue fumbled out the cheap lie with which he had armed himself.

"We only set down to rest up there, Mr. Duff! Kearns, he knocked out his pipe on a keg. I said: 'Kearns, sure, that was a damn'-fool thing to be doin'!' We hadn't gone on a hunerd feet when—" He covered his face with one clawing, wretched hand. He was sobbing. "I'm a church-goin' man, Mr. Duff! I wouldn't willingly take the life of a fly. But we ran. We didn't know—we was scared."

"Where's Kearns?" Looking into the little bloodshot eyes, advertising their guilt, Johnny was sick.

"We split up. Mr. Duff, as sure as the Lord looks down on us—"

"Empty your pockets," Johnny said.

McKewen's mind chewed on this for a moment before his hands went into the pockets of his sagging denim trousers. He pulled them out, his fists full, and just then the import of it reached his face. He moistened his lips.

Johnny said sharply:

"Well, open them up!"

McKewen's arms fell to his sides. He kept his eyes on Johnny. His fingers opened, and a small clutch of objects dropped to the earth. On the ground by his right foot lay a copper five-cent piece, two silver dollars, a horn pocket-knife—and a dynamite cap.

CHAPTER THREE

AT eleven-fifteen, Johnny marched his prisoner into camp. McKewen seemed stunned and had not spoken all the way down. Johnny ordered him into a boarding-car. He went inside the dark, dusty interior and searched the Irishman's hammock and gear for weapons. Then he turned on him sharply.

"Did Hedenburg know you were going to do it?"

McKewen sat on the hammock with his hands hanging between his legs. "I reckon so, Mr. Duff. But it was one of them damned things a mick'll do when he's drunk. You can take it or leave it, but—we done it for a joke! We got to laughin' over how it would be to see them Chinks come a-pourin' out of the cut!"

"Who suggested it?"

McKewen hesitated. "It was all pretty gay up there, last night. Faith, I don't know whose idea it was! But me an' Kearns took it up, and when we'd done with drinkin', we bought the dynamite and started back." A light of recollection touched his face. He said: "I remember how it was! 'I'll sell you the powder, boys,' Ben says, 'but I want no part of the joke. But if you're determined to do it, be damned careful of your teeth when you crimp the cap. So you see, Mr. Duff, there's nobody to blame but me and Kearns."

Johnny frowned. Somehow this sudden nobility of McKewen's regarding Hedenburg was out of character. Hedenburg was as guilty as the railroad men for selling dynamite to drunks, and McKewen must know it. The suspicion was strong in him that the sutler had ribbed them up to the whole thing. But a suspicion like that called for a motive; and who but a homicidal maniac would propound such a ghastly joke? Hedenburg was too shrewd to be considered a maniac of any kind.

Johnny posted a guard at the door and left.

The noon whistle sounded. All the discordant noises of the railroad ceased: Sledges were thrown aside; the rattle of earth from the embankment into the fill ended; iron peddlers parked their jangling carts. From the trestle and from the grade beyond it, Chinese came on the trot to their group messes, while the outnumbered white laborers tramped to their immutable fare of beef, beans, bread and potatoes.

Ed rode in just before the whistle sent the men back to work. He was empty-handed. Johnny met him at the

horse corral. "It looked as if he was heading for the stage road," Ed announced. "I thought I'd be sticking my nose into something if I tried to take him at Hedenburg's, without a gun."

"I caught McKewen," Johnny said. "We'll have to turn him over to the sheriff at Auburn tonight and go after Kearns. My guess is that Hedenburg jockeyed them into it."

Ed hoisted his saddle to his shoulder and faced Johnny. "How long are you going to let him get away with it?" he demanded. "I don't know what he's got against the road, but you can bet that the grief he's made hasn't all been accidental. And he'll keep right on making it until he's stopped."

Johnny frowned. "The law won't close him up, but maybe we could hang a padlock on him ourselves. What about tonight, when we go after Kearns?"

Ed deposited the saddle among those of the riding-bosses. "Why not? Even if he gives Kearns up, we can take him with the most possible trouble. Come around after dinner."

Darkness came early, the sun sinking gloomily into banks of cloud and fog over the valley. Johnny spoke to six of the gang bosses at dinner. They were men he could count on; hard men, railroad men who knew no profession but the iron. Afterward, he secured his Navy Colt from his quarters and strolled on, through the darkness, to Carney's car. A night mist was cool on his face. He knocked at the door and called: "Okay, Ed."

A chair moved, and someone crossed the floor. Then Babbie's voice said: "Pop! Where are you going with *that* thing?"

ED STOOD IN THE DOORWAY, buttoning his coat over the revolver he had not succeeded in hiding. "We're taking a prisoner up to Auburn," he growled. "Johnny found out Kearns and McKewen set off that blast this morning. We've got McKewen."

Ed came down the steps. Babbie was right behind him. She stood in the light from the door, hugging herself with cold. She saw the horses under saddle near a pile of ties.

"A gang like that to take one man to town?" she declared. "I didn't come to the railroad yesterday, Pop. You're going to close up Hedenburg."

"The Irish," said Johnny, "don't need crystal balls, as long as they've got their women."

"Is it funny?" Babbie asked.

Ed said: "No, honey; it's not. Only—it's got to be done. He set himself up there to make trouble. He's got to be taken care of before something else happens like this morning."

He started for the horses. Johnny hesitated, wanting to say something to make Babbie understand it wasn't as chancy as she thought—no worse than cleaning out a den of rattlesnakes. But he could think of nothing more reassuring than to smile and say: "Don't worry: I'll make him stay outside with the horses."

Her silence, the long, grave look she gave him, stole his smile. She said: "You're young, Johnny. I wish I were half so young. Then I might be able to take this life. Every week some man forgets to take his foot away when the rail comes down, or a blast goes off prematurely, or somebody falls off a trestle. And every time I see the Doctor saddle his horse, I think—what if it's Pop or Johnny!"

"You take risks in any business!" Johnny shrugged.

Babbie gave him a tired smile. "I know. Only—maybe not so many. I suppose I'm talking like a mother sending her little boy off to school. But if you two come back with holes in you, I'll wrap up this darned railroad and send it back to Sacramento for keeps. . . . No, go on; they're waiting for you." She gave him a push. Johnny went, with the perverse satisfaction of the warrior going to battle, who knows he leaves someone behind to worry over him. . . .

About ten, they reached Auburn, where the stage-road from the gold towns of the mountains intersected the Sacramento freight road. They took Tim McKewen to the red brick jail on the fringe of Chinatown. Then, eight strong, they jogged down the hill and left their horses under the oaks behind Hedenburg's store, at the Auburn Ravine ford. The saloon occupied the northern half of a lanky, unimaginative frame structure divided into a mining-supply house and a bar.

There were other saloons strung along the streets which climbed steeply to the business center; but Hedenburg's caught elements which settled to the bottom of the hill: Teamsters hauling in from Sacramento, miners with a little dust to spend, and a big thirst to kill.

They decided that it would be best for Johnny to go in first, Ed following. The rest would enter in pairs, distributing themselves about the room. Johnny's lanky stride carried him across the porch. He walked into a low-ceilinged hall where all a man could take in, at first, were the noise and the heat. A big iron stove, squatting in a tub of sand, started a process which the bodies of overheated men continued. They stood at the bar, ringed the gaming tables, and shot pool in an alcove at the rear. A music-box was beating out: "She May Have Seen Better Days."

Noise went with each of these operations, shuffling and arguing and loose-jawed laughter. Johnny stood at the end of the bar for a time before he was noticed. He had time to map the place out. His gaze searched for the man Kearns, but he did not see his bald head and rounded shoulders in the room, nor had he expected to. Then Ben Hedenburg, presiding behind the bar, approached him.

He slapped both hands down on the pine and waited, smiling. He was a robust man with dark skin and pale eyes; the hair that should have been on his bald head grew from his lip and jowls in an unkempt black mustache, and a fringe of beard around his wide jaws. He wore a buckskin shirt with dark rings margining the armpits; close up, he smelled rankly of perspiration and sour, chewed cigars.

Johnny ordered beer. Hedenburg drew a foaming schooner from a barrel. When he set it down, Johnny asked quietly: "Where's Kearns?"

HEDENBURG'S SMILE DWINDLED; two lines appeared between the gray eyes. "Who's asking?" he said.

"Duff and some others."

Hedenburg rubbed his nose. "Kearns and McKewen left about five o'clock this morning. They haven't been back. Why don't you put those boys in a corral, Duff? They're good customers, but my God, can they raise trouble!"

"Let's skip the sparring," Johnny suggested. "I've got McKewen in jail for manslaughter, and I'm going to put Kearns in the same place. Let's take a look in your back rooms."

In the back-bar, Johnny saw Ed's face reflected. Then Hedenburg did the unexpected. "It's what you get for trying to help a worthless down-and-outer!" he deplored. He selected an iron key from a bunch that hung on his belt. "He's in Number Six. Damn the Irish fool! What happened down there? He said he'd got in a fight and somebody was gunning for him. Wanted me to hide him."

"Is that what he said?" Johnny asked, smiling. He went through the door at the end of the counter into a narrow, unlighted hall. A little light came from the door; at intervals along the hall yellow blots of light paved the floor.

Number Six was dark. Johnny put the key in the lock and turned. He threw the door open. Within, a bed suddenly creaked, and a man's weight made the floor planks whisper. A voice clogged with fear rasped: *"Ben?"*

Chapter Four

THE round, cold eye of Johnny's Colt looked into the room. He moved inside. "It's Duff," he said. "Don't be a fool, Kearns. You may get off with manslaughter, if you don't make trouble now. But if you do—" In that small space, the blast of exploding powder was staggering. For one instant the room seemed to blow up with light. The flash showed the form beside the bed; it gave Johnny a target. Kearns' bullet had gone into the wall. Shaken, Johnny squeezed off his shot; the recoil lifted his forearm. Again he fired. In the orange burst, he saw the rail-setter stumbling forward with his hands blindly reaching.

He heard him fall. The ropy gasping of the man's lungs held him there, aghast; stronger than any feeling of relief was the realization that he had shot a man, had probably killed him—that the bullet which had been in his gun an instant before was now in Kearns' body.

Shouts from the saloon turned him back to the hall. He was sweating, but it was a cold, unhealthy sweat. He had never even pointed a gun at a man before. It had come instinctively. Someone banged into the hall; he backed into the room. But it was Ed's voice that called out.

Johnny walked toward him. "I had to shoot him," he said. "He fired at me."

Ed's grasp on his arm, hurrying him back to the saloon, was reassuringly solid. "Forget Kearns!" he said. "Hedenburg's started things! He ducked when the shooting started—came up at the other end of the bar with a shillelagh. I don't know how many men he's got, but the rest are heading for the door."

In the smoky twilight of the saloon, half the lamps having been extinguished, panic shook up the reins. Hedenburg was moving fast down the wall to the rear alcove, where startled pool-players were dropping their cues to run. He began to break cues over his knee, tossing the tapered butts to employees who were beginning to rally.

"Ten dollars and a quart of whisky for every head you break!" he shouted.

From the confusion of pounding boots, overturning chairs and grunting, swearing men, two forces began to work out. Most of the crowd wanted no part of this affair but to get out. But the dozen employees who flocked to the big sutler quickly deployed into a rough skirmish line, with Hedenburg as a bearded general in the center. Johnny's gang bosses, armed with pick-halves, moved in on the saloon men.

Johnny scooped a stein off the bar and hurled it at Hedenburg. It hit the saloonkeeper in the shoulder. Hedenburg wheeled, roaring his fury, and charged. It was poor generalship: Without a leader, the skirmish line broke up. Railroad men now picked their adversaries and went to work. They were outnumbered but not outmanned. Theirs was a hard trade, in which fighting was considered a rare, off-hours treat. A shillelagh was their tennis racket.

The saloon was emptying fast, so that the fighters had all the room they needed in which to maneuver. There was a smell of smoking wicks; Hedenburg had managed to darken half the lamps. Johnny had only a confused idea of just what went on. He had his gaze on Hedenburg: The sutler, a black ebony shillelagh cocked, strap about his wrist, was a sight to break up a riot. He came at Johnny, kicking chairs out of his way. Johnny broke a chair over a table and took one of the legs as a club.

He hoped Hedenburg would rush him, but the saloonkeeper was craftier than this: He stopped short of Johnny and made a couple of feints, moving around lightly on his feet. He kept his left shoulder up, those narrow gray eyes studying Johnny across the greasy buckskin parapet. The blunt end of Johnny's weapon went into Hedenburg's face like a sword. Hedenburg grunted; his nose began to bleed.

He came in, then, the shillelagh flashing. Johnny flung up his club; he felt the impact to his teeth as the chair-leg splintered. The shillelagh found his ear, glancingly, but it set off a red explosion in his brain. He threw the splinters of the chair-leg away and went after Hedenburg with bare hands. The saloonkeeper's throat came into his grip as he lurched after him; he was choking and cursing and forcing him back to the wall, with the sutler threshing savagely. A rack of colored balls boomed stutteringly upon the floor. Johnny began to hammer at the rough features. Hedenburg, taken by surprise, was suddenly in trouble.

In the semi-gloom another man came up silently. Johnny did not sense him until he had sprung onto his back. Hedenburg tore loose, spitting blood. Something flashed into Johnny's vision as the man on his back held his neck in an arm-lock and reached around with his free hand. A knife: that was his first thought. Then he saw that it was the sawtoothed ring of a broken bottle.

One arm was still free. He reached for the other's wrist as the bottle slashed. He caught it, but an edged tooth of the brown glass ripped his ear. Blood spurted against the wall. They stood like that for a moment, muscles locked against muscles. Hedenburg came in again, but suddenly he staggered and his hand groped up to his head, and just then a yellow pool ball dropped to the floor. He went down, heavy and loose, like a shot steer.

It slowed Johnny's adversary for a moment. While his attention was on Hedenburg, Johnny hauled the man over his shoulder, slamming him on the floor. He grabbed a billiard cue and put him out of action with two blows.

FOR THE FIRST TIME Johnny had a chance to look around. There was one skirmish still going on—an Auburn man in a corner standing off three railroaders. The music-box finished its five-cents'-worth with a run. The battle ended while Johnny watched. The big room seemed quiet. Railroad men stood among the shamble of tables and chairs.

Ed came up with a bruise like a turkey egg under one eye. He turned Johnny's ear to the light. "My God!" he exclaimed. "If you aren't a sight! Your ear's torn half from your head." He sent two men for Kearns, and the rest of them began to drag fallen gladiators out the back. When it was all done, lamps were smashed on the floor. The building was blazing well when they departed. . . .

It was necessary to take Kearns' body to the sheriff's office and make a report. The sleepy deputy who was on duty knew about McKewen and Kearns and the trouble at Bloomer Cut; he was not inclined to become interested in the case, other than to ask a few questions and take their story laboriously in cramped handwriting. . . .

End-of-track, when they returned, was silent. On the hillside, coals from evening cook-fires made rosy puddles. A turned-down lamp burned in the telegrapher's quarters; as they passed the string of boarding-cars, they could hear the lusty snoring of tired workmen. The gang bosses turned in here, except one man who had a head cut to be stitched. He and Johnny walked to the infirmary car. Ed had hurried on to reassure Babbie.

The Doctor pulled on trousers and boots while his patients waited on straight-backed chairs. One end of the car was partitioned off as a rude operating-room. Grumpily, hungry for sleep after being up until late with victims of the cave-in, the Doctor stitched the gang boss' cut, then examined Johnny's torn ear.

Dr. Cuvillie was a lank gray man with a stringy neck; he breathed heavily through his nose. "You're about halfway 'twixt havin' an ear and not," he grunted. Blood was all over Johnny's face. He could feel it gummily between undershirt and skin. When he looked at the lamp, small golden sparks pinwheeled before his eyes: It was the first inkling he had had of faintness. There was a feeling of pressure at the base of his skull.

Cuvillie squinted over his needle. Before starting to sew, he glanced at his patient's face and immediately brought a glass of brandy. "Replace some o' that liquid you've been losing, son."

Johnny held on while his ear was put back together. He lost count of the number of times the needle thrust exquisitely into bunched nerves. He was sweating; and when Cuvillie threw the needle onto the table, Johnny's arms were stiff from holding onto the chair.

"Guess you can clean yourself up somehow," the Doctor said. "I'll take the stitches out in three-four days."

Someone ran up to the car and mounted the steps. It was Babbie, who came into the reek of antiseptics in the car. She wore an old blue robe with her auburn hair in papers; she looked, Johnny thought, like something seen in the middle of an Indian attack, she was that wild-scared.

"Johnny!" she exclaimed. "For the love of heaven—"

She came closer, saw the raggedly-patched ear and the blood in which he had dyed himself. She flinched. Her eyes flicked to the Doctor and back again. Johnny could see the blood drain away from her lips.

She said, in a whisper: "Doctor, I—I think—"

IT WAS JOHNNY WHO CAUGHT HER.

Cuvillie sopped a ball of cotton in ammonia while Johnny laid her on the cot. He passed it back and forth under her nose. "Mighty chicken-hearted, for a railroad woman," he growled.

Her pallor, the dark smudges under her eyes, frightened Johnny. He asked huskily: "You don't suppose—I mean, it's not her heart, or anything?"

Cuvillie thought it over. "Not in the medical sense of the word," he grunted.

Johnny hadn't time to figure that one out before Babbie winced and turned from the bite of the fumes. She took a long, tremulous breath. Cuvillie helped her sit up. He handed her the brandy glass.

"It—it was such a shock!" she said. Her fingers pressed her temples. "Pop said he only had a little cut. Then I came in and saw him—like *that!*" She looked at Johnny, horrified.

Cuvillie folded his arms. He had been a railroad surgeon for fifteen years, with time out to serve with Grant. "How long have you been on the railroad, girl?"

Babbie looked up. "Why—all my life."

"Then how is it you pass out at the sight of a little blood?" Cuvillie was apparently going to get to the bottom of this. But there was a sparkle in his eyes.

"A *little* blood!" Babbie stood up and pulled the belt of her robe tighter. She turned her back on the Doctor. "I've got coffee brewing," she told Johnny. "Come down for a cup before you go to bed. But for goodness' sake, wash up first!"

Johnny rather liked the turn things had taken. There was a tingling in him when he saw how the color had come back to Babbie's cheeks. He remembered how she had come bursting in, even though she thought it was only a minor cut; and then the way she had worried over his going up to Auburn, tonight. Did those things add up, or didn't they? Even the cold water of the washtrough couldn't cool his blood completely.

Breakfast or midnight snack, Babbie set a tempting table. There was, in addition to coffee, a pan of freshly made doughnuts on the red-and-white gingham cloth. "I made 'em while you were gone," she said. "The women make doughnuts while the men get their heads broken—that's the railroad! Johnny, you big lout, do you have to lay every rail and fight every squabble personally on this darned railroad?"

"Line o' duty," said Johnny. The doughnuts were golden brown. Under the tender crust their hearts were light and sweet. *To have a doughnut-maker like this in your car!* Johnny thought. His mind was off on a wild tangent; there was a singing in his head. The Doctor had said: *Her heart's all right—in the medical sense of the word....* Blind! Blind as a bat! All the little clues he had ever had welded themselves together. Now he saw meaning in a hundred little memories.

He couldn't help grinning; and Ed remarked: "Wish I felt as gay as you look. But I wonder if we've seen the last of Mr. Hedenburg."

"Likely," Johnny said.

Babbie gave him a long, studying glance. Her chin, it seemed, went up a trifle. She promptly stood up. "Well, I don't know about you two, but I'm going to bed. The next time you go out on night patrol, don't expect doughnuts when you get back."

Johnny took six of the doughnuts and made his goodnights. He walked on springs to his car. He sat on the cot, unlacing his boots, trying to see the dingy interior as it might be under Babbie's administration: Windows would have to be cut in the walls first, of course; curtains, then, and rugs, and a kitchen installed at one end. And a tub. A woman must get tired of bathing in a copper washtub.

Wise old Cuvillie! Johnny scratched his head. He'd have to bring him up a bottle of something from Sacramento next time he was down. All these months, perhaps, she had really been wanting him to speak. Because he didn't, she got ornery and ran down the railroad and everything it included. But even Ed had said she would be back in a hurry if she ever did leave the iron. She fitted; she belonged—

Wishful thinking, maybe; but tomorrow, barring acts of God, he would find out!

CHAPTER FIVE

DURING the night the rain began. The grade was an ocean of slops when the whistle turned the workmen out in the morning. Broken earth, red as cinnabar, melted into a gumbo that sucked at the laborers' heels. Raindrops, slanting from a gray sky, danced on the yellow puddles. It was late April; this might be the last rain until October.

The supply train came blasting up the grade, and the regular morning circus began. Horses and mules, their backs reeking, struggled through the mire, pulling freight-wagons and light iron cars. Foremen brought supplies tallies to Johnny from time to time, where he stood on a flatcar. And again everything was short. There were only twenty kegs of powder in the tin-roofed powder-car. It was a mistake someone at the storage yard had made: that was the only way Johnny could figure it. But he would have to wire Rocklin to make sure.

As he started for the telegraph-car, one of the telegraphers came down the shoulder to give him a message. Johnny stuffed the flimsy in his pocket and ducked into the Carneys' car. Ed was keeping his promise to eat

a leisurely breakfast. He and Babbie were reading the morning mail.

He poured himself coffee, and with a smile at Babbie, sat down to read the telegram. Babbie gave him a quick, careful look and went back to her letter. But Johnny wasn't fooled. He could hardly switch his mind back to business, for all the breathless thoughts in his hand.

Then he began to read; the blood rose to his head and seemed to suffocate him. In three hundred words, Collis P. Huntington informed him that the always-spindly supply line had snapped in the middle.

There was no more powder in the storage sheds at Sacramento; there was only a ten-day supply of rails. The Central Pacific had finally stalled.

Ed must have been watching him, for he said: "Now what?"

Johnny took a big swallow of coffee. He read the telegram again. Then he said: "Listen. . . ." He read it: It was a cry of despair and an appeal for help. Someone had been working while the Big Four slept. Hedenburg's store suddenly had the magnitude of a fly which had been annoying them. The real grief had been shaping up in San Francisco harbor. Every steamboat line between 'Frisco and Sacramento had been organized against the C. P. (That hadn't been hard to achieve, Johnny thought; the steamboat men knew their profits would be practically ended when the Central finally laid rails to the harbor.)

In addition, an unknown party had acquired options on all available dock space. The schooner *Jamaica*, lying at anchor with a quarter of a million dollars' worth of matériel from Baltimore, was unable to unload. Her master had given notice that the supplies would be dumped at Portland unless they were taken off before he finished painting and refitting the ship.

Huntington said he had done all he could. He now suggested that Superintendent Duff come down himself for a look.

JOHNNY STOOD UP and flung the balled paper out the door into the mud. "If we had anything but a gang of ex-grocery clerks down there! It's not enough for me to build the damned road: I've got to have a spare-time hobby of pulling supplies out of a silk hat."

"What are you going to do?" Ed asked.

Johnny drew a long sigh, a troubled sigh that ended in a groan. "Go down to the harbor," he said. "What else is there to do? Find out who's got us cornered and how much he wants."

Ed's sunburned face relaxed slightly. "Pretty sure of yourself, aren't you?"

"Why not? It's nothing but a scheme of somebody's to make some easy money. We'll pay him off, if we can't throw a scare into him."

"Maybe," suggested Ed, "the U. P. would like to tie us up for a while, till they can reach Salt Lake City. You couldn't buy General Dodge out."

"We can guess all day," Johnny stated, "but the only way I can know is to go down and smell it out. I'll get a clean shirt and hop the supply-train back."

He hesitated, before jumping down. His glance went to Babbie. There was a quiet smile at the corners of her mouth. It was a superior, almost a disdainful smile, as though she knew how it had been with Johnny last night; but also as though she knew that the woman he was already married to, the High Iron, would always throw him a smile at the last minute, this way, and draw him off over the hills. There was nothing he could do but go.

He said, "Well—take it easy, you two," and departed.

When the supply-train whistled out the flag, Johnny ran down the grade to jump aboard. The little four-four-oh locomotive took up slack with a crash of couplings. Her drivers spun, found the sand, and she started down. It was warm in the cab, where Johnny sat on his valise, but the rain leaped through the openings in wet gusts. He put his gray derby, part of his town rig, under his coat for shelter. He was wet and miserable, but the real misery was inside him.

At Rocklin, division terminal, he transferred to the passenger train, which jolted, swayed and pitched into the capital in an hour and a half. He had an hour's wait before the packet left for the harbor; he visited the Central Pacific office, over Huntington and Hopkins' hardware store. He found the Big Four sand-bagged by their worries.

HUNTINGTON REPORTED that the blockade appeared as solid as a brick wall. "Whoever's engineered it," he said, "he's hiding behind the letterhead of the Inland Steamship Company. That's all I was able to find out. The office is on East Street. Just a blind. Look it over, if you want to. And draw on us for up to a thousand, if you need it. We can't last a month without supplies; the pay-roll will cut us to our knees."

The packet ran out of the storm at Walnut Grove, hauling into San Francisco at dusk. In the murky twilight, fog moved in from the Farallones, dark bars of light breaking it along the horizon. It scuffed across the waterfront and blurred the paper lanterns of Chinatown; it softened the gay, tragic lights of the Barbary Coast.

Johnny went down the landing-stage into the chill atmosphere of the Bay City. Despite the dusk, it was only five o'clock. It occurred to him that the Inland Steamship Company might still be open. Accordingly, he took a room near the waterfront and ate a hurried dinner at an oyster shop on Fisherman's Wharf. On the darkening water of the bay, the red and green riding-lamps of the fishing-fleet bobbed in the mist. Drays cannonaded over the cobbles. Johnny walked until he saw, over an office jostled among a solid row of grimy brick fronts, the sign of the steamship company.

The firm did not, apparently, go in for "front." One lone, elderly clerk stood behind a letter-press in back of a railing. A door behind him warned: *Private.*

Johnny asked: "Boss in?"

"Will I do?" the clerk countered. He did not look up after his first myopic appraisal of the visitor. He had a pouchy, pink-and-freckled face, white hair, and loose under-lids like those of a St. Bernard. He placed a sheet of wet muslin between two pages of the copy-book, closed it carefully, and slid it in the press.

"It's a business matter," Johnny stalled. "I'm with the Sacramento Poultry Supply Company. We've got an order from a hotel here for a thousand fryers a month. But we can't take their business until we know what it's going to cost us to set those fryers down in the kitchen."

"You could 'a' written and saved the trip." The clerk screwed the press down until it groaned.

"Well, you see," Johnny told him, "I was coming down anyway." He opened the gate in the rail and stepped inside. "If you don't care, I'll just step in and see Mr.—"

"No, you don't!" The old man was immediately in his path. "He aint in. Call around tomorrow, and I'll have the figgers for you."

"Old-timer," Johnny grinned, "I'm not really with the Sacramento Poultry Supply at all. I'm a banty rooster myself, and I've got a notion I may find some corn in there."

The veined old hands pushed impotently at him. Johnny stood fast, a big and hard-jawed man in his tight-fitting city clothes, his gray derby down over one eye. "Now, now!" he chuckled; he spun the old man and sat him down. He walked quickly to the office door and opened it. It was nearly dark inside; there was a single

window on the alley. Johnny took a lamp from a wall bracket, entered the office and set it on the desk.

The drawers were empty. The desk-top was bare of all ornament save the lid of a saleratus can, which served as an ash-tray. The tray had been used; and as he looked at it, Johnny became conscious of an aroma—

Where—and when—had he known it before? A cigar-band lay scorched in the ashes; he examined it, and all at once, he knew. . . .

An ash—an odor—a red-and-gold cigar-band. Sometimes such things are sharper than words to prod the memory. They swept Johnny back to a day in Sacramento just after Mr. Judah's death.

A man named James Daggett had sought him out a week after Judah was buried. Daggett had silver mines in Nevada Territory, about fifty miles from where the road would pass. They called him Silver Jim, over there across the Sierra Nevadas; they said the mining dollars he owned would make a mountain almost as high as the Sierras themselves. But if the road by-passed the town of Chloride, where Daggett's mines were located, he would take a sharp loss. Other mines of lower-grade ore would boom simply because they were closer to cheap transportation of ore and equipment. Johnny knew this, and Daggett did not make any secret of the fact that he was facing ruin and meant to fight it.

Silver Jim Daggett showed him a map. It depicted the Central as crossing the summit, not at Donner Pass, but at Johnson's Pass, forty miles south. It would cost little to make this change, he claimed. And it would set the C. P. right down in his back yard. Since Johnny Duff was the only man who knew where the railroad was supposed to cross the mountains—

He explained all these things over cigars and brandy. He was rather proud of the cigars; they were especially made for him in Cuba—rum-soaked. Johnny hadn't cared for them.

Daggett had said: "I like being rich, Johnny. I think you would too. You should try it sometime."

But Johnny Duff hadn't. And Daggett hadn't liked the way he refused. Johnny had never heard from him since, hadn't thought of him, really, until just now, when he walked in here and smelled one of those miserable rum-soaked cigars, and saw the same florid label—

Very softly, the door was closing behind him. Johnny reached it in two strides, but it slammed then, and the lock clicked. On reflection, he wasn't sure he wanted to go out that way, anyway. The old man might have summoned the police. Or he might have a gun.

He unlatched the window on a dark and narrow alley, scented with ordure and fish-heads. He stepped through and began to walk. He had nearly reached the end of it when he realized he was coming up against a blank wall. He turned and walked back, faster now, toward the other end.

Two men, two shapes, rather, drifted into the mouth of the alley from East Street. At the same time, Johnny heard the window of the steamship office close with a bang. The men up the alley began to walk toward him.

Chapter Six

JOHNNY waited in the middle of the alley. To retreat, would only put a wall at his back. He thought wryly of his gun, lying in his valise in the hotel room. A surprise charge, a head-on slam into one of the pair approaching him, began to shape up as his only chance to break out of the *cul-de-sac*. He heard the rear door of the steamship office open. Someone slipped out of the building and stood in the heavy gather of shadows against the wall.

Suddenly the draw-cord began to tighten. From three corners of a triangle, they were moving in on him. A swift pulse awoke in him, a throb of desperation. They were all expecting a rush toward the mouth of the alley. That, perhaps, was why his glance reconnoitred the wall at his left.

What he saw held out a hand of encouragement. The ash-cans ranked along the wall were tall, whereas the unbroken roof-line of the buildings was low. When he moved, it was the man who had come from the steamship office who took his headlong charge. A bludgeon of some kind went up, tardily. Johnny's fingers closed on his wrist, and he forced it back, at the same time driving his fist into a slack belly. The man went down, paralyzed.

Johnny stepped over him, ran a few steps, sprang to the top of the ash-barrel, and crouched for the jump. He went up, reaching. The rough fabric of the bricks caught his finger-tips. He wriggled, trying to better his hold. A second man, darting in below, swung at his legs with a length of pipe. The muscles of Johnny's right calf cramped, agonizingly. He bit his lip; for a moment he was looking out upon a great gulf of blackness into which the pain was drawing him. His leg hung useless. He saw the man swing again; an urgent despair gave him the power to draw up his left leg and kick, viciously.

The attacker went to his knees, hands over his face. The pipe jangled on the cobblestones.

Johnny chinned himself on the wall, threw a leg over, and sprawled on a roof. He heard a sound that for a second held him rigid against the roof: the thin crack of a small-caliber pistol. That sound blended into the whine of a ball glancing off the brick parapet. Afterward, there was the sound of a man scrambling onto the trash-barrels.

Johnny came to his feet and tried to run; but the aching muscle of his leg would provide no better than a dragging limp. The nearest shelter was a raised skylight. As he started for it, he heard one of the trio begin to shout: "Man on the roof! Man on the roof!" It was at once a cover for their own noisy activity and a noose to trap him.

JOHNNY LAY BEHIND the peaked glass tent of the skylight. On East Street he could hear the first random sounds of a crowd taking shape—inquiring voices, boots thudding over the plank wharves. He saw two hands grasp the edge of the roof.

He had an inspiration. He sat up and brought the heel of his hand down on one of the panes. Shards of broken glass jangled into the darkness below. The racket went sharply through all the others. Johnny limped to the low ridge between the individual buildings and dropped behind it just as a head came over the wall. A man scrambled over, and drawing a gun, ran to the skylight. He stood with his back to Johnny, staring downward. Then he ran to the street side and shouted: "He's inside! Block the doors and we've got him!"

He returned, bent over the broken skylight and tried to peer into the gloom below. He fumbled for a match. He had just lighted one when a sound caused him to turn. The man who had come up on him gave him a gentle push, with just enough force to thrust him an inch beyond the invisible line which gravity draws when a man does anything so foolish as to lean over a broken skylight. It was gravity whose leaden palm thrust against the middle of his back while, gasping, he arched himself, drew up on his toes, and reached back with his clawing hands. As he fell, the scream finally came.

Johnny dragged himself away, limping toward the end of the block. A taller building mounted to block him, and it was here he had to drop again to the alley he had

quitted. A glance showed him a knot of men, one bearing a lantern, clustered about the rear of a building. He took the six-foot drop hard, his leg buckling under him. He got up and painfully ran toward the corner.

They were still trying to open the door when he made the turn.

On the way back to the hotel, Johnny bought a pound of Epsom salts at a druggist's. These he dissolved in steaming hot water when he reached his room. The tub was too short for him; he sat with most of his body above the tub, like a very long Indian in a very short canoe. His skin was white, all but his big bronzed hands and his dark face and neck.

For the first time he was able to conjecture about Silver Jim Daggett's connection with the fracas.

Granting that Daggett's soul would batten on any harm he could do the Central Pacific, Johnny still could not see what he stood to profit by the wrecking of the railroad. Revenge, of course, was always a tasty morsel, but not if it cost Daggett most of his fortune to achieve it. Steamboat lines did not refuse business for nothing. It came to Johnny that Daggett was moving some very heavy machinery with a minimum of noise.

Now that Johnny knew he was in town, he had another lead to follow. The silver king's home was in Nevada. Therefore he should, logically, be at a hotel. San Francisco had many hotels, but only a few good enough for a millionaire.

Johnny's watch said eight-thirty when he finished soaking his leg. He dressed again, put on a clean shirt and topped it all with the gray derby. The brown-featured, smiling man in the mirror seemed to approve. He was not precisely a vain man, but the notion was there that a man who worked hard for a living cut something of a figure when he came to town. He tried to picture Babbie on his arm, with a parasol and a new bonnet; and he rather liked that idea too.

AT THE THIRD HOTEL HE TRIED, the Marshall, the clerk said: "Yes sir, we have a Mr. Daggett. Mr. James Daggett, of Chloride, Nevada. He is *the* Mr. Daggett," he added, smiling.

"Will you tell him John Duff wants to see him?"

A bellboy brought word that Silver Jim Daggett would be happy to have Mr. Duff visit him in his suite. Johnny ascended a wide, carpeted stairway and wandered down a corridor.

Down the hall a door opened. A large man with a sagging belly backed out of a room, holding his hat deferentially against his vest. "Yes sir!" he said. "We sure will. We would have this time, only—" Then his head turned, and his myopic eyes found Johnny.

"Mr. Daggett!" he whispered. *"That's him!"*

Johnny did not slow down. He joined the party. The old clerk from the Inland Steamship Company backed up as Daggett laughed softly.

"It's all right, Harry. Thanks for coming. I'll talk to Mr. Duff now."

Johnny prudently looked into the room before he entered. It appeared to be empty. They went inside.

Daggett said: "Sit down, won't you? I rather expected you all week. I notice you're favoring your leg." He smiled, a man of fifty-five who kept his years sternly at bay. There was energy in his movements; his skin was brown and weathered. His hair was dark, brushed through the temples with gray. The shirt under his smoking jacket was pleated white silk; he wore a black string tie.

"Let's put away the fencing foils," Johnny suggested. "I'm favoring my leg, and I reckon a couple of other men are licking some wounds too. The point is, I found out what I went there to find out—that you're the man behind the harbor blockade."

Daggett poured brandy from a cut-glass decanter. He looked into Johnny's eyes as he gave him the glass. "Well," he said, "I'm one of the men, anyway."

"Hedenburg?" Johnny asked suddenly.

Daggett's face told nothing. "Hedenburg? Should I know him?"

Johnny passed it over. "What do you expect to get out of this piracy?"

"Call it piracy if it pleases you," Daggett replied blandly. "I merely took an option on all the Sacramento steamboats to handle my freight. I'm speaking only of railroad supplies, of course."

"Railroad supplies!" Johnny snorted. "Strap-iron rails and ore-cars! It's a fraud, and you know it."

"On the contrary," Daggett stated, "I expect to be sending quite a bit of railroad material up the old freight road —regulation supplies, rails and spikes, ties and powder. I thought you might have heard: I've gone in with some Dutch Flat men on a road of our own."

CHAPTER SEVEN

JOHNNY was still sitting there in a kind of vacuum when Daggett chuckled: "Go ahead and say it! But it won't do you any good, because I've got more money behind me than Huntington has. This road is more than a threat, Duff: We're going to lay tracks across the Sierras! The main difference between my road and yours is that I'll have supplies to build it with."

Johnny's brain began to function again. "How far do you think you can get," he asked, "when we hold the franchise to build the Pacific railway?"

Daggett lighted a cigar. "The Pacific railway," he said deliberately, "really doesn't concern me. I'm building the Nevada and Oregon. It will run from Virginia City, by way of the Johnson Pass, to Sacramento, and on up to Portland. Probably a branch line to San Francisco. Strangely enough, most of the money for it has been guaranteed by the Dutch Flat men I mentioned. It seems that they have some grievance or other against you—" He smiled.

Johnny did not need a blueprint. Dutch Flat, thirty miles east of end-of-track, was calling the Central Pacific the "Dutch Flat Swindle." Judah, at one time, had thought of taking the railroad through the lusty gold-camp. On the strength of that preliminary line, hotels went up, land boomed, a new stage-line was put through from the southern camps. Dutch Flat had never got over the blow of having the stakes finally driven two miles south of Main Street.

"Naturally,"—Daggett shrugged—"if we complete our road first, it will kill the Central's reason for existence. So I imagine it will be the Nevada and Oregon that finally connects with the U. P. . . . Johnny," he said suddenly, his eyes animated in the strong, deeply-rutted face, "the Big Four are wrecked. But you aren't. I need an engineer, a man who knows the stakes in this country. You're the man. And by God, I'll pay you more money than you've ever seen, if you'll jump the fence into my pasture!"

Johnny stood. His eyes made no lies about how he felt; they were dark with anger at the silver king. For two years he had been standing over this relic of Theodore Judah, daring anyone to meddle with it, and he had not done it by pulling punches.

He said: "I'll make you a bet, Daggett: That a year from now nobody will remember the name of the Nevada and Oregon Railroad except some busted stockholders. And that I get those supplies out of the harbor in three days."

Daggett rose as he went to the door. His eyes looked dry and old, and there was a humorless scrape in his voice. "You're a damned young fool, Duff. But you'll be a lot older and wiser if you touch those supplies!"

Johnny walked the foggy streets, angry and upset. He wasn't selling Daggett short. Daggett had millions behind him, his own fortune and the gold-money of Dutch Flat. He had a plan which might stand the test of the courts. The idea of building a railroad over three or four hundred miles of the roughest terrain in the country was fantastic; but it might serve as legal armor from behind which to fight the C. P. If Daggett could keep them tied up long enough, he might gain an advantage they could never overcome; or he might break the company completely.

Those supplies had to move; not next month, but now. . . .

Johnny's boast had been made in anger; yet behind it was the skeleton of an idea. One thread of his mind went back to the days he and Theodore Judah had spent in San Francisco while the engineer canvassed every bank, and every lending-house, in the city for backing. Not a dime of loose money was ever found; it was after this that he moved up to Sacramento and found the Big Four.

Weary, heart-breaking days; but what Johnny was remembering of them was an old ferryboat captain whom Judah had almost persuaded to sell out and invest in the Central. He had never even known his last name; everybody called him Captain Harry. Yankee caution had finally kept Captain Harry at the helm of his ferryboat. Yet Johnny recalled how sorely tempted he had been.

The fires in Captain Harry were banked; but they were still fires. Johnny walked back to the hotel, wondering if Captain Harry were still tromping the wheel of his ferryboat.

In the morning, Johnny went down to the waterfront and found Captain Harry's Trans-Bay Ferry slip, facing the green, feminine hills of Oakland across a blue reach of water. He paid a quarter and boarded. He passed down the long passenger saloon, which with its walnut pews and stained-glass windows was almost like a church. There was the deep pound of walking-beam engines under the flooring.

He found the Captain in the pilot-house, reading a red-plush Bible. Captain Harry had not forgotten him. He greeted him warmly. "Well, my boy! Didn't think I'd ever be seeing you again, once those mountains swallowed you."

He had some kind words for Mr. Judah. He had the admiration of one individualist for another. "'That man,' I told myself, 'will shake California from one end to the other!'" he said. "I wish I could have been in it with you. But you understand—" He glanced at Johnny. He was a gray-bearded, easy-going giant with fingers the size of sausages, trimly uniformed in blue and brass.

"Sure," Johnny said. He stood at an open window.

A bell jingled. Captain Harry said, "If you'll close the window, John, we'll be starting. That harbor breeze has been honed on icebergs."

The *Marina* nosed out into the bay. In the sapphire embrace of the harbor, ferries turned white shavings from the water, and ships under half-canvas glided alongshore. Captain Harry, whose boast was that he had read the Bible eleven times, not skipping the "begats," began to sing a hymn.

We shall come rejoicing—
Bringing in the sheaves! Bringing in the sheaves!

Johnny decided it was as good a time as any to get his foot in the door. "How would you like to bring in some sheaves of gold, Captain?" he inquired.

"That's a riddle," Captain Harry declared.

"Captain," Johnny said frankly, "I'm in a corner. I'm trying to build that railroad, and somebody is trying to keep me from doing it. That's not according to the Book, is it?"

The Captain suggested that he explain. Johnny told him the story. He said: "So Jim Daggett has us where all we've got left is a franchise and a pay-roll. But what would prevent a boat like yours, say, from taking a contract from the Central to carry material to Sacramento?"

Captain Harry chuckled. "That's the nicest thing anybody ever said about the old *Marina*—that she was fit for the river traffic! But I'm afraid she isn't. She was used for a while on the San Joaquin, but she disgraced herself with her own sluggishness. That's how I got her."

"She could carry light loads, couldn't she?" Johnny insisted. "Captain, I'll see that you make a thousand a month if you'll freight for me!"

Captain Harry's mild blue eyes turned on him. He removed his leather-visored cap, and smoothing down his hair, replaced it. He pondered it. At last he said: "Suppose we see the master of the *Jamaica* tonight about unloading in my slip. Sometimes I've thought I went into drydock too early, anyway."

Chapter Eight

That was the first move in a gambit that brought the *Jamaica* into a ferry slip two nights later. Benches had been removed from the ferryboat, and the parquet flooring covered with planks. Tons of iron and a mountain of powder-kegs mounted inside the waiting-shed. It took all night and the next morning to unload the schooner, but only four hours to load onto the *Marina* what she could carry. Still, Johnny figured, three or four loads a week would keep the railroad moving until they hit easier going, where the supplies would have to come fast.

He had one more thing to take care of before he returned to camp: He visited a jeweler's and departed poorer by one hundred and twenty-five dollars, but richer by a modest engagement ring.

Captain Harry hired a river pilot, having only a harbor license himself. At dawn the next day he double-gonged steam into the cylinders, and the overburdened little ex-ferryboat backed out and straightened up for Sacramento. He and Johnny stood at the windows as she plowed up the bay, watching the red disk of the sun come up behind the hills. The boat gained way slowly. Out in the bay, fishing-boats were already moving.

After a few minutes Johnny saw the pilot turn to study the boat's wake. He turned back to the wheel. "Boat followin', Cap'n," he said. He was a Roman-nosed young fellow with a brown imperial.

Captain Harry opened a rear window for better vision. From the wheelhouse, the view was a broad one, the lowest deck lying far below, the harbor, flecked with whitecaps, open on all sides. A few hundred feet astern, another boat rode their wake. Captain Harry pulled at his chin whiskers.

"Do you reckon we can outrun her?"

The pilot shifted on his high stool. "And us loaded?" he said. "That's the *A. J. Miller*—Inland Steamship Company."

So then Johnny knew what they were in for. He watched the other boat eat up their lead until they could see every detail of her white-and-crystal gingerbread superstructure. She was running light, with no passengers to be seen, and only a few crewmen. Her big sidewheels turned strongly, pulling up blue water and pouring back white foam.

"If this was my boat, Captain," said the pilot mildly, "I'd go back. We aint going to float very long, ever we get stove in."

Johnny stood watching the *Miller* close in. He felt a lot less gay than he had an hour ago. Captain Harry had the profits, probably, of his whole lifetime in this boat. He said what he had to:

"It was a good idea, anyway. But we'd better put her about, Captain. Jim Daggett means business."

The boat lurched gently as the pilot began to spoke off. But the Captain hauled the big walnut wheel back. "Did I say anything about going back, Mister?" he thundered. "We're still going to Sacramento." He rang for more steam, ferociously.

The stub prow thrust a little more ambitiously against the choppy waves. Without effort, the *A. J. Miller* absorbed this slight difference of speed. Then, surprisingly, she began to swing off to starboard, as though making for the Contra Costa shore. They watched her come abreast, far out, then abruptly turn and come back on a course that would bring her into the narrows abreast of the *Marina*.

Captain Harry studied the situation.

"She's got right of way, now. If we honor her, she can herd us all over the harbor. If we don't, she'll ram us."

The pilot sat there, sullenly keeping the boat on her course. "I aint losing my license on your account, Captain," he stated.

The Captain's hand pulled him rudely off the stool. "You'll find smellin'-salts in the ladies' lounge, Brown."

The door slammed. Johnny heard the Captain mutter: "Sickly, cigarette-suckin', fresh-water sailors! Ten of 'em wouldn't buy one deep-water man!" He took the wheel himself.

Under his collar, Johnny felt the skin roughen. They were coming to the point of the wedge now; the *A. J. Miller* had complete control of the situation.

Then Captain Harry exclaimed: "Thunderation!" He yanked at a whistle-pull. The boat's hoarse belly-tones went across the water, repeatedly. "Distress signal," he grinned. "She's *got* to give way. I may hear from the Commission, but I'll lay odds she won't get past us again if I ever get the lead in the narrows!"

Then Johnny saw steam lift in morning-pink puffs from the *A. J. Miller*. She was close enough now that he could see the men at the pilot-house windows, and the gingerbread paneling of her side-wheel paddle-boxes. The deep pedal-notes of her whistle reached them. As Captain Harry listened, the exhilaration left his eyes.

"She—she aint giving way!" he said. "I believe she intends to ram us!"

They watched the riverboat bear closer, her superstructure looming prodigiously over them. She was running with five feet more freeboard than the overloaded *Marina*. That gave her the power to walk up on the ferryboat's deck, sending green water rolling into the boiler-room, throwing down her cargo. Johnny thought of those tons of rails beginning to slide—

There was fascination in the way the *Miller's* big side-wheel buckets pulled through the water, raising a snowy cataract. The blue of the water, the pink of the sky, and the big steamboat moving between them—it was all very beautiful, but very deadly to any small boat in her way.

SUDDENLY JOHNNY STRAIGHTENED. It was a fantastic idea; but so was the situation. He yelled at the Captain, as he ran for the door: "Bear off a little! Give me two minutes—"

Down on the freight deck the rousters were standing in an anxious huddle. He put them to work, two men to operate the steam loading-boom, and eight others to run out a rail and slide it through a chain crotch-line. The loading-boom took up the slack. He had the rail swung beyond the guard-rail and lowered to water level.

Across them came the shadow of the *A. J. Miller*. She was crowding them off to larboard, her lead secure. Captain Harry hung on the whistle; steam plumed straight up the side of the stack from its brassy mouth. Johnny could see the riverboat's master in the pilot-house, far above them, a big, laughing man.

He signaled the men on the loading-boom. *"Let 'er go!"*

The boom began to swing. The rail, lagging on the crotch-line, caught up swiftly, swinging in like a battering-ram. Up there in the wheelhouse, the master had stopped laughing, and another face was pressed against the glass for a moment. The rail went into the paddle-box like an arrow. The buckets caught the end of it and pointed it at the sky; for a moment the wheel stopped. A paddle tore loose, and the wheel moved again, stutteringly, rolling a few degrees through its circle and halting once more to try to bend the rail.

But it couldn't be done. The paddles swore to that, snapping off like decayed teeth. The pitmans added grinding testimony. Somewhere in the belly of the boat a cylinder-head blew off with a shattering report. The *Miller's* other engine kept the starboard wheel churning, sending the boat into a slow pinwheel. Her prow struck the *Marina* and slid down her bull-rail; then the little ferryboat shook loose and went pitching and rolling on up the bay.

The rousters yelled and pounded each other. Johnny ran above and found Captain Harry calmly standing his trick at the big walnut wheel. Looking back, he could see the *A. J. Miller*, motionless, now, rocking helplessly on the *Marina's* wake. San Pablo Bay opened before them. They plowed victoriously toward the narrows.

"I'm not sure, John," Captain Harry said, "that that was according to the Book. But I *did* sound the distress signal. And by George, it was nip and tuck for a while, wasn't it?"

HE BEGAN TO LAUGH, his shoulders shaking. "A Sacramento River boat whipped by a ferryboat! They'll laugh the *Miller's* captain out of every bar in town. You might call Mr. Brown back. I don't think his scruples should bother him now."

Later, as he went by the texas, Johnny heard Captain Harry's voice piously raised in "Old Hundredth." He fancied he also heard the pop of a cork.

They reached the Sacramento wharves in time to have the boat unloaded before dark. The Central Pacific storage yard was empty of all but a block-long rank of redwood ties, and a few tons of spikes and fastenings. A line of flats was kicked out on the spur to rush an emergency ration of powder and iron to end-of-track.

That night Johnny slept on the boat. In the morning he introduced Captain Harry to Collis Huntington, and a contract was drawn up. Huntington agreed to lend whatever was necessary for the acquisition of other boats. The Captain did not seem worried about future trouble.

"We're inside the law," he said. "But if Daggett still wants to play rough—well, gentlemen, I didn't turn back when the breezes blew off the Horn."

Johnny caught the supply-train for end-of-track an hour later. There was a kind of singing in him. He had met Daggett on his own ground and won the first tilt. Most of all, he had stolen the anonymity which would have been worth so much to the miner who dreamed of a railroad empire. If trouble came again, they would know where to look for the cause.

At Rocklin, another engine was coupled on for the drag up the hill. New locomotives of the John Conness type, four-six-oh's, had been ordered; but all the hauling

was still done by coupling up locomotives of every wheel-arrangement ever known to the California railroads to a combination able to handle the load. They were tough, resplendent little engines, richly endowed with brass—brass steam-dome, brass sand-boxes, steam-chests and cylinders—but the power in two driving wheels, or even four, was quickly sapped at Barmore Grade, the first pull of the line.

He rode in the cab, where it was warm and a man's clothes wouldn't catch fire from cinders. They boomed across Newcastle trestle and found end-of-track half a mile beyond. There were springs in Johnny's heels as he legged it up the line toward the camp-train. He had some bragging to do to Ed; and he didn't mind if Babbie were around too. He had the feeling he always had when he was absent from the road, and from her, for a while: that coming-home feeling.

He pounded on the door, and Ed yelled: "Well, don't knock it down, dammit!" Ed was lacing his boots when he entered. The storm had brought a quantity of mud into the car, which Babbie's broom, surprisingly, had not yet molested. The interior was cold, only a small fire crackling in the cook-stove. Babbie was, apparently, still in her room.

Johnny straddled a chair. Ed straightened up to look at him. "I don't need to ask if you ate the canary," he grunted. "You've got feathers all over you."

"Got our iron, got our powder!" Johnny declared. "And I got in a couple of Sunday punches, too." He bounced up and told about it while he walked up and down the car, wondering if Babbie were listening behind the door. All at once he stopped. On the cot where Ed slept was piled a lot of gear that he recognized. It was his own. He glanced around; Ed was standing there with a forced smile on his face.

"I took the liberty, Superintendent," he said, "of havin' your damned gear moved over here yesterday. I got to worrying about you catching the scurvy or something in that flea-bag of yours."

Johnny was puzzled. Ed's smile seemed to tremble a little; only his mouth took part in the whimsy. His eyes looked haunted.

"Why—that's swell," Johnny said. "But what about—" He jerked his head toward Babbie's door.

"Don't worry about that," Ed said, and his mouth suddenly gave up the attempt to be funny. "You see, Babbie—" He cleared his throat and bent to resume his boot-lacing. "Babbie's leaving today, Johnny. For good."

Chapter Nine

JOHNNY sat down. It was like a stiff blow over the heart. There were no words in him; nothing but shock.

Babbie's door opened, and she came out. She had her hair up, with a red bandana knotted Creole-fashion about her head. Her sleeves were rolled to the elbows. "You won't need the alarm clock, will you?" she asked Ed. "As long as there's a whistle in camp, they won't let you oversleep." Then she saw Johnny. "Hello!" she said. "I didn't hear you come in."

"What's this about you leaving?" Johnny asked, with false heartiness.

"Didn't Pop tell you?" She took the clock off the shelf over the stove, and her fingertip discovered grease on the nickel. "Well, do you remember that theatrical outfit that rented a box-car for a week last winter, when the floods caught them? Garrett's Golden State Entertainers? They stopped overnight the same day you left. Can you believe it? Mr. Garrett wants me to sing with them—for fifty dollars a week!"

Yes; Johnny could believe it. He could believe anything wonderful of Babbie. And of course there wasn't another girl in California with a voice like hers. But until his heart quieted down, he couldn't accept it. "So you're really going," he said.

"Am I going!" Babbie gave the interior of the car an appraisal that would have been considered good theater almost anywhere. "I'm meeting them at Grass Valley tonight. I'll have a couple of weeks to rehearse before the summer tour of the Lode starts."

Johnny sat with his hands in his pockets; his gaze found its way to the mud and roadside litter beyond the door. Except for a smile he kept pinned to his mouth, he looked as sunk as he felt. "Just for the summer?" he said.

"Not unless they fire me!" Babbie declared cheerfully.

"Fifty a week," Ed said in a slow, rough voice. "And I'll eat railroad spikes for breakfast if you aren't back in three months, kissin' the rails! You don't get the iron out of your blood just by changing your address."

"What if you never had it in your blood?" Babbie retorted carelessly.

NO ONE SPOKE, THEN. The noises of the construction camp seemed suddenly intensified—the shouting of teamsters down at the creek, the racket from the mess-car, a blacksmith's hammer ringing. . . . Noises essentially masculine.

"Miss this hullabaloo?" Babbie said. "Miss never getting the dirt out of my house, and having train smoke ruin my wash, and—"

Ed held up his hand. "The defense rests."

Babbie whirled back into the bedroom, and Johnny had flashes of her moving between dresser and closet and trunk. Ed got up and took his coat off the hook. But just as they were going out, Babbie's voice called after them:

"Oh, Johnny! Will you have them hold the supply-train a few minutes? I'll try to be there as soon as they finish unloading."

During the work, Johnny fumbled numbly about. When it was over, he told the engineer to hold the train, and went to get Babbie. And then, from somewhere, there came back to him the certainty he had had the night before he left for San Francisco—that all the time he had been mooning around, she had been waiting for him—that part of her dissatisfaction stemmed from impatience.

Well, that was giving himself credit for being pretty much of a lady-killer. But Johnny suddenly knew he was not going to retire that ring to storage without giving it a chance first.

Ed was just leaving the car when he approached. Ed saw him, turned quickly and walked the other way. Poor old Ed, thought Johnny. It must be as tough for him, in a way, as it was for himself. But maybe he'd have good news for him.

Babbie's trunk was just inside the door. He got it on his back and staggered down to the caboose of the supply train. Then he went back, to find her coming down the steps. "Better let me carry you," he said. "You'll have mud up to your eyeballs."

In his arms she was light and warm. She was quiet, but he sensed an inner disturbance. His arms ached, not with the burden, but with wanting to crush her to him before three thousand Chinamen and a couple of locomotives. He deposited her on the platform of the crummy. He gave the engineer the highball.

Babbie reached her hand down to him, her eyes suddenly moist. "Johnny, you've been grand—"

Johnny swung onto the platform as the couplings crashed down the line to the caboose, and the train slowly started. He looked into the caboose: It was empty. He turned and took possession of her hands. Her eyes were puzzled.

"If you're wondering if I've gone crazy," he said, "you're right. I've been a little crazy ever since you and Ed came to the job."

Her eyes searched his face. He had never seen her so serious. And then she gave a little laugh, a laugh with reproof in it. "Johnny Duff," she said, "you aren't going to propose!"

Johnny fished the ring out of his watch pocket. "I've carried this thing two hundred miles. And at that, I almost didn't get to use it." He felt his grin slipping. He couldn't be gay about it. "Babbie, you know what I'm trying to say. . . I'd have said it months ago, only—Well, I didn't think there was any use until that night after I got mussed up, up at Hedenburg's. What I'm trying to say is—"

The caboose, to have its say in the matter, gave a lurch that banged them together. It was the easiest thing in the world for Johnny to bring her into his arms. He had his arm around her waist, slender and supple as a willow branch; he had his hand behind her head, his fingers in her hair, and his lips were on hers. She did not resist; he thought a tremble went through her. Then she pushed him away, a little bit breathlessly.

"Why, Johnny, I'm surprised!" she scolded. "And you a married man!"

Johnny stared.

"Well, if you aren't married," Babbie conceded, "you're as good as married. You've already got a fiancée, and her name is *Railroad.* A girl might as well be married to a switch-engine as to a man in love with the iron."

The platform under Johnny was tottering. Things were not working out. He said desperately: "Maybe I let Cuvillie fool me. But I thought you were pretty worried that night—"

"Of course I was worried," Babbie said. "Why not? You're the kind a girl likes to worry about. Nice, and quiet, and—well, *almost* good-looking. A girl could be more than just worried about you, too; but you see, Johnny, I've been careful. I knew what it would come to if I ever did let myself become interested. Because with men like you and Pop, there's no compromise."

It meant everything, the question Johnny was going to ask, and Johnny's eyes were grave. "Would there have to be a compromise? Don't you think things might look different to you, if—"

"I don't think," Babbie said gently, "that the road could ever look any different to me. I'm all through with shanty-cars, and melted butter in the summer, and frozen potatoes in the winter. I'm going to be civilized. I'm going to wear slippers, instead of brogans. I'm going to see flowers in my front yard instead of piles of ties." She squeezed his hand. "Johnny, can't you see why I want them? Because every woman has a right to the kind of life she wants. And mine isn't here."

The hell of it was that Johnny could. And Babbie knew it: Her eyes told him that. She folded his fingers over the ring. "If we'd met anywhere but on the railroad!" she said. "But we didn't, darling. So there's nothing to argue about, is there?"

Johnny put the ring in his pocket. "You talk better sense than any girl I ever knew," he admitted. "But it's the first time I've ever wished a girl would talk as crazy as I've been!" He said: "Good luck, Babbie. We'll be looking for you once in a while."

THE TRAIN WAS LIMPING over unsettled track. From the bottom step, he jumped onto the neat apron of new ballast. He waved, and turned, and under the cold gray ceiling of mist started up the tracks. . . .

He got through those first few days as a man gets through anything he has to. He groped, searching in his work for a foundation for his spirit, and not finding it. What he could never get out of his head, what kept him eternally out of step, was the idea that he had somehow muffed it. If he could have accepted it, could have believed what she had said about not letting herself become interested, it might have been easier. But he kept thinking: *It's a test. She's making me decide between her and the road.*

Well, hadn't he decided? He couldn't give up the iron: That was as sure now as it had ever been. Yet somehow hope kept the place for him, like a slip of paper in a book he intended to reopen sometime.

But if it were a test, he soon realized it was a real one. By the end of spring, she had not come back. Two months of the ninety days Ed had given her, were two-thirds gone. They had letters from Downieville, from You Bet, from Nevada City. She was thrilled about her work. Mr. Garrett promised to take her to San Francisco when the troupe went back for the winter season.

But not a word about the railroad. In his heart, Johnny began at last to doubt.

But with the road, things began to pick up Captain Harry bought another boat and hired a tough crew to man it. Supplies were moving again. And yet Johnny could never forget Silver Jim Daggett. He never shook the feeling that a fuse was burning somewhere.

With sweat, black powder, and more sweat, the powder-gang finally blasted through Bloomer Hill to release the log-jam of material piling up behind it. The grading camp was already far ahead of the main work-camp. Now Johnny whipped his tie-and-rail crews through the cut.

SUMMER HEAT was upon them. The white laborers grew dark and gaunt. The Chinese worked on as cheerfully as ever, stopping frequently to take sips of lukewarm tea from kegs along the right of way. Johnny thanked the gods for them. They were peaceable and hard-working, healthier than the white workers because they did not try to live on a diet of starches. Their little cooking-pots were filled with dried oysters, cuttlefish, bamboo sprouts and seaweed.

In July the railroad made contact with the stage-road at Auburn, beside the ashes of Hedenburg's store. Now at last they had punched a hole to tap the rich traffic of the gold-fields. From all the towns and camps of the district, miners and their freight poured down the stage-road to the temporary station at Auburn, to finish the trip into Sacramento in parlor cars.

A few days later they had word from the marshal, at Auburn, that Tim McKewen had broken jail.

The trouble at Bloomer Cut seemed so far behind that at first the name had no meaning for Johnny. Then he remembered the telegrapher who had been a party to the dynamiting in which two workmen had died. McKewen had made his escape just two weeks before he was to hang. Johnny was vaguely disturbed; but the following week he had enough grief to make him forget McKewen. . . .

All at once they were in the mountains, and everything that had gone before seemed like a pleasant dream that would not come again. The scarps soared breath-takingly before them; pine forests and manzanita thickets deepened. Wood-cutters went ahead to hack a path through tangles of red-and-green manzanita. They opened an aisle a tall man could not see over. Their bucksaws and axes sang in the pine and fir woods.

These were mountains to keep lamps burning half the night in the engineering car. Granite studded the blood-red piles of earth that went up to rock-fanged ridges. Dry Creek Valley, Clipper Gap, Wildcat Summit—they fought these battles and won them. Behind end-of-track was a gigantic rubbish of deserted sawmills and the trash of broken camps.

Then one day Digory Huling came down from the camp at Bear River Gap, where the first tunnel of the

route was being blasted through five hundred feet of gray rock. He was almost in tears.

"Them Chinks, Mester Duff!" he wailed. "Hit's fair driving me to my grave! Buggered drills by the case. They'll drill a two-foot 'ole and try to set a charge! I'll stand up fer 'em in the open air, but hin a tunnel they're worthless."

Johnny went up to the camp with him. He knew Digory was right; hardrock men was what they needed for the tunnels, but Huntington insisted they could not afford a crew of experienced miners.

They reached Bear River Gap in an hour, a high notch in one of the flinty ridges north of the American River. It was far too lofty for tracks to be laid through it. Judah had specified a five-hundred-foot tunnel as the only solution. Digory had a crew at each side of the ridge, working toward a meeting at the center.

Johnny called together the men who spoke English. To them, he outlined a plan by which a man might earn up to a half-dollar a day in extra pay; he added that, as another feature of the plan, they would pay for time lost retrieving broken drills. But the half-dollar got them. They went back to work.

Digory took his crew to the north tunnel. Johnny decided to stay today and watch the result of his plan. He gave the men time to have drilled a six-foot hole twice. Then he went past the gang of muckers, chattering among empty powder-kegs at the adit of the tunnel to see how the charge was being set. Two Chinese were rolling powder in newspapers for insertion into the breast-hole. Johnny tested the hole with the tamper. It was about three feet deep.

He put them back to work: Two men to double-jack, one to relieve the man on the sledge. They had been single-jacking before, work-and-rest, work-and-rest. Now the hole went twice as fast.

He set the charge himself. The muckers were still seated at the mouth of the tunnel, smoking and talking. "Clear those men out," he told one of the workmen.

Without warning, one of the muckers leaped from the keg on which he had been sitting. Johnny did not understand the words he screamed, but he did know the language of smoke and flame, which were emanating from the keg he had been sitting on. In a kind of paralysis, he saw the muckers scramble from the tunnel. He heard the pressure in the keg build up to a hiss.

Chapter Ten

JOHNNY looked into the hag-face of terror. He stood there watching a geyser of flame mount to the ceiling, hearing the rush of imprisoned gases. The keg had not, apparently, been empty after all. A spark from one of the pipes had ignited the powder. It was a hundred feet from where he stood to the adit. It was an inch to death.

A dense cloud of smoke blotted out the daylight. It swirled toward him, a bright fog shot through with flame. He began to run. He fell, cutting his hands and knees on the stones. He went on in a scrambling crawl until he realized what he was doing and got to his feet again.

The pressure in the keg was now a screaming force that tried every seam. The smoke, choking him with its sulphurous hands, enclosed him. He flung himself past the searing heat of the powder keg. He fell on the ground, and a small pajama-clad shape darted out to drag him from the tunnel.

They ran up the hillside into the pines, waiting for the blast that might destroy the work of many days. Johnny dropped, his head hanging forward and his arms splayed back to support him, getting his breath. The air was hot, but it was clean, and bright and free.

Smoke continued to billow from the tunnel, but the blast did not come. At last they knew that the heat had burst the top from the keg and allowed the powder to burn without exploding. But Johnny was still trembling.

He hunted up Digory. "You can hop the stage any time you want," he declared, "and bring back a crew of Cousin Jacks. I'll fight it out with Huntington when the pay-roll goes in. These would-be powder-monkeys are going back to the tie-gang."

HE WENT BACK to camp. Ed, working out the alignment of a curve while track-layers waited, laughed when he saw him, black with smoke.

"Somebody give you a trick cigar?"

"Somebody gave me a trick powder-gang." Johnny told him what had taken place. Then his attention was caught by a clerk approaching with a yellow telegraph flimsy, and he waited. But the man handed the message to Ed.

"Just came in, Mr. Carney."

Ed's brows pulled in as he read it. "Now, what the hell!"

"Funny one, aint it?" the clerk agreed. "Johnson said he thought the tap was familiar, but he couldn't place it. No station letters, either."

Ed hesitated a moment, then shoved it into his pocket. "All right. Thanks." Then he glanced at Johnny and walked slowly toward the camp train. He handed him the message.

Johnny read it. *"Some things is worth more than railroads, Carney. If you got anything particular you don't want to lose, better find another job."*

Ed was growling, "Somebody must have tapped the line somewhere. What the hell do you suppose it means?"

Johnny's mind was way ahead, in an ugly country that frightened him. *"If you got anything particular you don't want to lose—"* He was thinking about Babbie, singing in the rough towns of the Mother Lode, where anything might happen. It might mean nothing; but again—

He said: "Remember Tim McKewen? He was a telegrapher. And Johnson thought the hand was familiar."

Ed's lips clamped together for a moment. "Yes, but why? What would it buy him? Or do you suppose somebody else—"

"That's what I was wondering." Johnny was asking himself if Silver Jim Daggett had somehow acquired McKewen. The Irishman was enough of a drunk to do anything for a little money. But somehow he couldn't believe that even a pirate of finance like Daggett would resort to such measures as this to cripple a competitor. Yet Daggett must know that the loss of Ed Carney, the best mountain engineer in the country, would hit the Central Pacific hard.

All at once it came to him that the answers to all his questions might be within riding distance. If McKewen had sent the message between here and Auburn, he must have left tracks somewhere—

"I suppose," Ed remarked, "they think they can scare me out by threatening to put a slug in me. Hell! If I thought my life was worth a dime, I wouldn't be building railroads for a living."

Johnny stared at him. Could he really be that simple? Did he think the gun was pointed at him, rather than at Babbie? So much the better if he did. And Johnny fostered the illusion by saying: "I reckon that's it, Ed. You'd better send it down to the marshal, anyway, just to keep him posted."

He went to the wash-trough, sluiced away the powder-smudge and dirt, and a few minutes later jogged out of camp with his rifle in the boot.

He followed the line of cross-arm poles beside the newly laid track. The sun was hot against his face, slanting toward the rugged western horizon. In this country there was only a brief twilight; the sun went down, and darkness flowed in. He gave himself two hours of trailing before sunset. He had gone about three miles when he noticed a suspicious congress of boot-prints at the base of one of the poles on the bank of a ravine.

Looking up, he could see where the wire had been scraped to provide a good connection for another wire. It was from here, then, that the message had been dispatched. On this spot, McKewen or some other telegrapher had knelt to tap out the message with a portable key.

Finding the horse-tracks was not hard. They started below the grade and followed a zigzag path to the bed of a dry stream, then struck roughly southeast. It was rough, brushy riding. He crossed a couple of low gaps, and at last, lifted to a high notch, saw the broad gorge of the American River south of him. The terrain was suddenly familiar. He turned to squint northward.

Three miles away, over the tumbled hills, he saw the dust-haze of end-of-track. He was following a course at an angle of about twenty degrees to that of the railroad.

The trail took him down to the gorge of the river. Presently he lost the sun. Coolness flowed down the mountainside, and darkness began to gather in the many side-ravines. On rises, he stopped occasionally to study the trail. Far ahead, abruptly, he saw dust. He put the horse to a lope; but the turnings of the trail gave up no glimpse of a rider.

The vast lonely cañon of the American was strongly in his memory. He knew every landmark before it came in sight. Giant piles of stones, taken from the river by miners working the river-gravel ten years ago, stood like monuments of an ancient race. Ahead, mounting a precipitous half-mile from the river-bed to the sky by a series of bluffs, was a black granite buttress Judah had nicknamed Cape Horn. It followed the curve of the American for a half-mile, a rugged, inhospitable block of stone.

Johnny remembered how for months they had fought against the fact that tracks must be spiked in some fashion to the broken face of the Cape, a thin thread of steel fifteen hundred feet above the river. But at last Judah was forced to accept it as part of the route. There was no other passage which did not lead into a blind alley. It would be the toughest part of the entire route, he had prophesied.

Johnny rode beneath the bluff, tensely alert; the foot of it was immersed in twilight, the timbered cap ruddy with the last glory of the sun. He brought the bit back, suddenly, to sit listening. . . . A scrape of shod hoofs came from only a few hundred yards ahead. A horse that, by the sounds, was moving fast.

The buckskin could travel when called upon. Johnny spurred it to a lope, his carbine warding off the slap of willow branches. The trail cut to the left, between two great boulders; and it was here that a lash of gunflame from a brush thicket sent a ball whistling down the trail.

Chapter Eleven

THE bullet exploded against the boulder at Johnny's right. It screamed across the trail and caromed again from the other rock. For a second the pass was a place of wild echoes and the expansive thunder of the gun. The horse began to pitch. Johnny blew both stirrups. He landed sitting. He scrambled up swiftly and made a lunge for a trailing rein. He got it in his left hand and fired the carbine with his right as the stallion began to drag him. It was purely a defensive shot. But a moment later he heard the other rider strike on up the trail.

He was forced to drop the gun to hold the horse. After he got it under control, he began to work back to where the gun lay in the dirt. It seemed as though he had not breathed since the shot came. He picked the carbine up, shoved a new paper cartridge into the chamber, a cap over the nipple, and waited. . . . Above him, a horse ran brokenly up the switchback trail that swung from the American, with Cape Horn behind, to ascend Robber's Ravine.

He remounted; he had his choice, now, of riding into another ambuscade or of turning back. He didn't like suicide patrols any better than any other man. But the prize ahead was worth some risk; and the thought that if the man got away, it might eventually mean danger to Babbie, sent him stiffly up the trail. His hands felt clumsy, the stock of the gun unfamiliar. He went at a walk, so that he could tell by sound the instant the other horse stopped.

But the horse did not stop until, far above, Johnny saw a hoof-spark where the trail topped onto the mesa. Just for a moment he had the vision of a man humped across the withers of a tired horse, looking back; and he cautiously held his own horse, until the cut-out picture against the rusty-green sky, just merging into night, disappeared.

He rode another half mile, the trail breaking sharply back and forth as it carried him to the same spot where he had last seen the other rider. Now he dismounted and left the horse tied to a manzanita. He went ahead on foot.

In the middle of the trail, he stopped. He wondered if he had got twisted somehow and circled back to camp. For below him, on the sloping tableland, glowed the flames of a dozen supper-fires. By the piles of material, it was unmistakably a railroad camp.

He was too shocked to move. Here, less than ten miles from end-of-track, was another camp—another end-of-track—*pointing west!* Building to meet the Central Pacific!

OVERHEAD, THE SKY WAS BLACK, frosty stars beginning to prick through the velvet. He could see nothing but what was delineated by the glow of the campfires. He reckoned, by Central Pacific standards, that this number of group-messes indicated about four hundred men. Not a large camp. But how in the name of railroading had it been brought this close without their knowing it? What about the blasting?

He had to look at the raw ends of the rails out there on the flat, risk or not. He started ahead. He could hear men talking and laughing. He smelled wood-smoke and coffee on the air. Suddenly the trail came into a wide, smooth path, free of boulders: the grade. A second look showed him it could not possibly be. The ground, here, was lower than that on both sides of it. Not far ahead, however, the low mole of a true grade began.

Then he knew. The old Dutch Flat-Johnson Pass freight-road was being converted into some kind of a railroad—the Lord knew how! If he could see the rails they were using, he might be able to understand how it was being done. So he went on, step by step, until he saw ties ranked evenly before him, and another fifty feet beyond, the ends of the day's track. He knelt to examine it. It was narrow gauge—hardly wider than a mine railway.

Johnny slowly straightened up, understanding it all now. A cheap, jerry-built line was being laid down with no idea of ever running a locomotive over it. A railroad built for the sole purpose of getting a prior claim on Cape Horn!

Then, from the weary day's-end murmur of the camp, a nearer voice went up like a skyrocket: *"Ben!* By God—if that don't look like—"

A pile of ties had half-hidden a tent twenty-five feet to his right. He saw two men standing at the flap of it. One of them snapped a rifle to his shoulder. The other, drawing a revolver, ran toward him where he stood rigidly in the middle of the grade.

Johnny fired at the first man and broke for the brush.

Chapter Twelve

WHAT had been a lazy, day's-end murmur over the camp died completely. Then the air hummed with startled men springing from the fires, as the reaction from the shot took hold. Men shouted questioningly into the darkness. A few moved uncertainly toward Hedenburg's tent.

Johnny figured it was about three hundred yards to his horse. Whether or not he reached it before someone sent a shot down the path was doubtful. It was a chance he could not take. He hit the brush.

This was one of the sections where the manzanita grew so thickly a horseman could not get three feet off the trail. A man afoot could bull through the mesh of polished red branches if he were willing to leave some of his hide hanging on every third twig. He could crawl, rend the fragrant lattice-work with his bare hands, force openings with his arms over his head. This was how Johnny started into the brush. He had a dozen deep scratches before he had gone twenty feet.

The misguided energy of the camp was being channeled toward him by the shouts of big Ben Hedenburg. There was no confusing the sutler's voice with any other in California. It was deep as the booming of a drum, as imperative as artillery. Johnny found no paradox in his presence. The link between him and Silver Jim Daggett was as natural as it had been invisible. Daggett had been the prime mover behind Hedenburg's store. And Johnny was asking himself if Daggett and Hedenburg were giving protection to Tim McKewen in return for value received. . . .

His plan was to swing into Robber's Ravine, to strike the stream-bed and work back to the horse. The very fury of the pursuit was the best weapon he had, for the hounds were making ten times the noise of the hare. When he stopped, he heard men forcing through the thicket behind him and at both sides. He had a clutch of apprehension: It was time to bear off to the left, to the ravine, but if he veered that way just now, there was every chance he would run into one or more of the hunters. Yet if he went much deeper into the thicket, he would be hopelessly lost.

He decided to cut for the ravine and take his chances.

Sounds behind him melted into the general uproar of the search, but those between him and the ravine became suddenly imminent. He crashed ahead a few feet and listened; moved on again, and again listened. He was moving to a junction with one of the searchers; yet to try to hang back would place him in jeopardy from the rear. In this dry jungle he was slowly being caught in a noose.

Suddenly he was conscious of the crashing of brush at his left. A moment later the manzanita stirred and a burly shape shoved through. Johnny waited. The man had a revolver in one hand, and with the other he wrenched back the last branch separating them.

Johnny leaped on him.

He had the man's gun-wrist solidly in his grip. He swung the barrel of the carbine against the round-domed hat and felt it strike the man's skull. He slapped his palm over the slack mouth; but only a sound like a snore came as the man went down.

Johnny stepped across him and struck out for the ravine.

The confusion of yells and snapping brush faded. Under his feet the ground began to tilt. Then the manzanita thinned, and he was sliding down a rough bank serried with rain-gullies. Part way down, he swung left, down-cañon, running and sliding until he emerged into the main trail. It was only another hundred yards to his horse; but as he ran toward it, he heard men coming over the crest.

He saw their bodies come into profile in the notch. He snapped the carbine to his shoulder; the shot hammered the ground near them. They fell back, fighting each other to get the crest of the hill between themselves and the gunman they could not see.

Johnny ran on, vaulted to the saddle and wheeled down the trail. He kept the animal at a lope until the trail flattened out beside the river. Then he stopped, listening. But over the whispering of the river he heard no sounds of pursuit.

He jogged along, reloading the carbine, thinking about Daggett and Hedenburg, and about Tim McKewen, who was a crack brass-pounder, but whose key said all the wrong things. There was nothing he could hang on Daggett except the crime of harboring a criminal, but that would be enough, if he could prove it. It meant searching the N. & O. camp in the morning for McKewen. He looked forward to that.

He hoped Daggett's outfit would try to shield him, for it would be a lever by which the Big Four's lawyers might be able to pry Daggett loose from his hold on the Horn. Unless some strategic weapon were put into Johnny's hands soon, it was obvious that the fight ahead would be won by the man who could throw the most men into the battle.

ED WAS ALREADY WORRYING when Johnny reached camp. Johnny ate lightly, talking it out with him. It was, Ed declared warmly, their best break in months. If they could find McKewen in camp, they would finally have legal ammunition for their guns.

Very early they started for the Nevada and Oregon camp. They took six riding bosses with them. This time Johnny followed the mesa road, instead of dropping down into the cañon of the American as he had the night before. It was the half-graded trail the railroad itself would follow.

Between Bear River Gap and the Horn, farmers had done much of the grading for them. The grade flanked orchards and small farms, ran along easy hillsides and jumped a hundred small ravines by fills. It marched through the raw new village of Colfax which had sprung up on the promise of railroad trade; it teetered along the edge of Rice's Ravine for a half-mile, and then went into the tightest turn of the route, a full half-turn across the cañon, striking the other side to double back along a steep hillside that became more and more precipitous until, suddenly breaking back, it terminated in the dominating cap of granite called Cape Horn.

Here the grade camp was stalled, while engineers made final tests of the type of geologic structure they were about to tackle. Johnny cut left from the grade onto the mesa, detouring around the Horn. They struck the freight road.

After a mile they sighted the N. & O. camp. In the hot and dusty morning, redolent of heated brush, they rode on into the full clamor of the work.

Ties had been bucked to end-of-track and beyond; rail-setters were laying down iron to a riding boss' cadence. In the daylight, the whole thing looked more like a railroad than it had the night before. It differed

chiefly from the Central in being narrow gauge. Johnny was surprised to see, flanked by stacks of matériel in the dingy city of tents, a panting work-engine.

The riding foreman spotted them and came from the welter of workmen to them. Even before he reached them, Johnny knew it was Ben Hedenburg. The tall sutler raised a hand as he pulled up. He had a grin for Johnny.

"Been a long time, Duff," he remarked. "I heard you're building a railroad too, over there."

Hedenburg's eyes were the only semblance of coolness about him, pale gray, with heavy, dark brows. His brown face was streaked with sweat, rutting the dust, and his buckskin shirt showed dark patches around the armpits, and a damp margin rising from his belt. He was an essentially ugly man; yet Johnny saw a crude magnificence about him, the physical impressiveness of the Horn itself.

Johnny ignored his thrust. He demanded bluntly: "Where's McKewen?"

"McKewen?" Hedenburg repeated; and then he smiled. "Duff," he said, "it seems like I can't get far enough away that you don't come a-manhunting. What makes you think I've got McKewen?"

"I had an idea," Johnny told him, "that he was one of the boys whacking the brush for me last night."

Hedenburg leaned on the broad Mexican horn of his saddle. "You didn't have to be so damned cagey last night," he chuckled. "What do you expect when you come sneaking in on your belly? After McKewen told me who you were, I had the boys hold their fire. I still wanted to know what the hell you were doing."

"You couldn't guess, when you saw McKewen?"

Hedenburg gave him a slow, studying glance. "If you're here about Tim," he declared, "you'd better talk to Daggett. He's in the crummy."

They watched him ride back to where freight-wagons were taking loads from the supply train.

Ed and Johnny glanced at each other. Daggett—up here! Impatiently, Johnny put his horse through the work-gangs, to draw rein at the platform of the caboose. Daggett appeared at the rail after a moment. He was in shirt-sleeves, a cigar in his mouth and a derby on the back of his head. All the signs of the mining king were gone—the diamond stickpin and the three-hundred-dollar suits—and yet he was still Silver Jim Daggett, the man who bragged that he worked hell out of his miners and made them love it. He wore laced boots and work-clothes, and his jaws had not seen a razor in several days. His air was as confident, as commanding, as ever.

"Light down, boys," he invited. "There's whisky in the car, and nothing but sun out here."

Johnny put his business shortly: "Have you got Tim McKewen?"

Daggett tapped his cigar against the brake-wheel. He looked at them as he drew on it. "He's inside," he said.

It startled Johnny, but not enough to keep him from swinging down and mounting the steps of the caboose. Ed followed, after a word to the others. The rear portion of the car was fitted as an office. There was a desk, a letter-press, chairs. Beyond a partition, ranks of bunks in a windowless corridor could be seen. Daggett took a bottle and three crockery cups out of a cupboard.

"Ben sent word down last night that he'd caught him," he said. "I came up from Randall on the supply-train."

Ed snorted. "You mean you can run a train on these streaks of rust?"

Daggett set the bottle down. "Excuse the California crockery, gentlemen. McKewen's in the bunk-room."

Johnny entered the gloomy, sweat-and-tobacco-steeped sleeping-section. None of the bunks was made, but in one of them a man lay huddled. Even though he knew McKewen must be tied, Johnny nevertheless felt a small shiver of apprehension as he went toward this man who had once cheated a hang-rope, who had been desperate enough last night to attempt another murder to make good his escape.

He prodded him with the barrel of his Colt. "We're taking you back, Mister."

McKewen did not turn over. Johnny waited; and then, wondering if the man were gagged, he reached down and touched his face. His hand recoiled.

Tim McKewen was as cold as stone.

Chapter Thirteen

Johnny went back and took up the drink Daggett had poured. He drank it in one tilt. "Was that a joke?" he asked. "He's dead as a mackerel."

Daggett shrugged. "Does it matter? The posters read *'Dead or Alive.'* He wanted Ben to hide him again after you made your break. Ben told him to go to hell. He already lost one saloon trying to shield that mick. He tried to throw down on Ben, and Ben let him have it." He poured Johnny another drink. His hand was rock-steady.

It chilled Johnny a little, for he knew Daggett had used McKewen as he would have used any other property he owned, discarding it as soon as it was useless to him. "What about the telegram?" he asked, watching Daggett's eyes as he put the question.

Daggett regarded him steadily. "Talking to you," he said, "is like playing poker. What's it going to cost me to get you to turn that card over?"

The cold vanity of his manner began to get under Johnny's hide. "I'm going to turn over a lot of cards in the next few weeks," he snapped, "and they're going to cost you exactly what you've put into your road. You made a brag once about some supplies in San Francisco Bay. I stuffed that one down your throat, and I'm going to do the same thing with another."

"Is there a law against building a railroad?" Daggett asked.

"Let's not talk about laws. We're making our own. Our lawyers could chew it over for three years, but by the time they were through, one of us would have a railroad and one would have a fortune in rust. You can build from here to Alaska if it pleases you, Daggett. But don't try to build around the Horn. That's C. P. property."

"As a matter of fact," said Jim Daggett, "that's just where I am going to build. It's the only possible route, and I'm taking it."

"And when you get through with it," Ed stated, "we'll move those rails a little farther apart and take them into the family."

Suddenly Daggett smiled. "We're talking like schoolboys, aren't we? If I wanted to boast, I could tell you that I've got half of Dutch Flat ready to back me up, that I can write a bigger check than a lot of banks can cover, and that I've already got blueprints for what I'm going to do to Cape Horn. Nothing makes more noise than the rustle of a dollar bill. And I'm going to rustle a million of them right under your nose—cash!"

He pointed a finger at Johnny. "You can take this down to Huntington, Mister: Jim Daggett will put up a million in gold for fifty-one percent of his stock—tomorrow, next week, any time!"

Johnny was unimpressed. "We've laid out two and a half million already," he told Daggett. "The surest way to cover that investment is to keep on talking like a schoolboy. If you don't think I mean what I've said, just keep on following the stakes to Cape Horn."

He went past Ed, the violent leaven of fury in him. Ed followed him, looking somehow let down.

Jim Daggett was on the platform of the caboose as they mounted. When they wheeled past him, he said pleasantly: "Then I'll see you on Cape Horn, boys. So long."

If Johnny Duff had not been convinced of it before, he was now persuaded that Daggett meant to stand up against anything the Big Four could throw at him. Perhaps in the beginning it had been bluff; by tying up their their supplies, he had hoped to buy into the company and force a route change.

Now the picture was darkening. The privilege of pressure was his. He could force them to take the initiative or stall them indefinitely. He could rally scores of miners to his standard—men who had money in his fight. Johnny, because he hadn't the wages to pay a complete crew of white men, counted a few dozen experienced railroaders, forty Cousin Jacks, and his army of Chinese, who knew and cared about no more of fighting than they found in a brisk game of fan-tan.

There was only one way to break the Nevada and Oregon's blockade—to strike before it was finished. He thought about it all the way back. When they reached camp, he had mapped what he knew would be the last campaign of the war.

Theodore Judah had said it would take months to build across the Horn. Johnny Duff was going to try to do it in weeks.

End-of-track was only a quarter-mile short of the Bear River Gap tunnel. Johnny moved Digory and half his Cornishmen from the almost-completed tunnel up to the Horn. He amassed a working force of four hundred men, wired Auburn to double the daily powder-ration, and put every freight-wagon in camp to hauling the tools of road-making over the gap and on to the grade-camp at Cape Horn.

Ed was not enthusiastic about the possibility of crossing the Horn with even a foot-trail before Jim Daggett reached it. "All he needs is a ledge a hundred feet long, and we're licked."

Test holes were shot. Digory brought back the good word that the bluff might give less trouble than they had expected. The black granite formation broke easily into blocks and ledges. Johnny hastily made up a dozen gangs to work ahead of the main camp. From the cliff-top he had them lowered in bos'n's-chairs down the precipitous face of the cliff. Hanging there like spiders, they drilled and tamped and set off charges that could not otherwise have been reached in days.

Through that week the roar of black powder went out over the vast cañon of the American River; dust and rock spouted to the sky; and when it settled, muckers swarmed in and shoveled the débris over the cliff. Ed, growing thin and brown and tired, laid track through Bear River Gap tunnel, and in four days brought the iron on to the end of the grade.

Ed's temper wasn't improving any with the heat and tension. He didn't like the way the alignment engineers were tackling a brow of granite which shoved out fifteen feet beyond the cliff-face. He complained to Johnny while the Cousin Jacks set a charge.

"Daggett be damned! We've got to run trains on this outfit some day. They're undercutting my lines to where we'll have to jack the rails up on stilts. Nothing's going to run on this road but a train with rubber couplings."

Then suddenly Johnny's glance, caught by a flash of color down the line, transmitted the incredible intelligence that they were about to have a lady visitor. His heart squeezed down and then seemed to swell until it filled his whole chest; for what woman in California but Babbie could walk through those sweating work-gangs with the grace and pride of a girl entering a ballroom?

A foreman named Clancy walked with her, red-faced and self-conscious. He said, "Somebody to see you, Mr. Carney," and bobbed his head to Babbie and disappeared.

Ed turned quickly. Like Johnny, he couldn't do a thing but stare. Was this the girl who had come to womanhood in the rough school of the railroad? This girl with a silk parasol over her shoulder, with a blue gown fitted to a miraculous waist and the breath-taking swell of her bosom? It was Babbie's smile and laugh—that was sure.

"Well, you two! Aren't you going to ask me to come in and set a spell?"

Ed had her in his arms, his cheek against hers, crushing her until she gasped. With a grin, he released her and looked at her. "You're no daughter of the iron!" he declared. "For shame! Splurgin' about looking like a bit of Dresden china!"

"Cornstarch and curlers," Babbie said, "can make the ugly duckling look like a peacock." And she made a little self-conscious gesture of touching her hair. It was more than that, Johnny thought hazily. Modiste and hairdresser had had their part in the transformation; but the real glory was still Babbie's. The little things—the tilt of her chin, the sparkle of her eyes—these were the things you meant when you said Babbie; the silk parasol, the fancy hair-do, were fluff.

"It took a flood," he recalled, "to bring Garrett's Golden State Entertainers to us before. What act of God do we thank for this?"

"You can thank the fact that we're playing Dutch Flat tomorrow night," Babbie smiled. "The stage is waiting for me over at the road. Naturally, I couldn't go by without stopping." She looked at him with sudden, almost flattering candor. "You're brown as an Indian, Johnny. You're even beginning to look like a railroad man."

"According to Huntington," said Johnny, "the resemblance ends right there." He reached to take her parasol with one hand and examine it minutely. "You know," he told Ed, "if we fitted the boys out with these things, we might be able to keep a crew."

"Laugh all you want," Babbie defended. "But I can't sing 'The Lass with the Delicate Air' and not look the part." Off in the distance a stage-horn blared twice. "Somebody's getting restless," Babbie said. "I wish I could have let you know we were coming up here, but it was pretty sudden. I'll see you both at the show, won't I?"

She did not wait for an answer. She pecked Ed on the cheek and squeezed Johnny's hand at the same time, and the next moment, except for a tiny trace of perfume in the warm air, it was just as though she had been a daydream he had had.

They were slow to get back to reality.

Johnny was still breathless and tingling. He had thought a protective coating was forming around the ache in him, like an oyster with a grain of sand. But what he was carrying around in his heart did not feel like a pearl, but a chunk of rusty iron. At last he knew how far Babbie had come since she left the road. She had the luxuries she had always yearned for. She was being paid to do the thing she liked best. Johnny Duff sighed, and felt as forgotten as the caboose at the end of a forty-car string.

Finally Ed broke the spell by hitching up his pants. "Well, this aint getting any spikes pounded," he growled.

Digory came up with a roll of fuse over his shoulder. "'Old your 'ats!" he said tersely. He stood, eyes squinted, as they awaited the shot.

The blast came, a deep, slow jolt through the hill. Smoke and dust burst from the cliff, a gray cloud for the

breeze to turn and tear. Ragged blocks of granite tumbled slowly through the long, twisting fall to the river. A section boss brought a clean-up gang forward. Johnny and Ed followed the rattling carts.

The black powder had torn out a good chunk of rock. Barrows and carts began transporting the rubble to the cliff-edge. Ed spoke to Digory.

"Let's have the next one right alongside that. A few more of those will bring us back in line."

Digory looked up. Slowly his jaw loosened.

Johnny's gaze was on Digory's face, so that the first warning he had of disaster was when the Cornishman started back, involuntarily. He saw his features twist; and then the yell came:

"Look out! The whole domned cliff's a-comin' down!"

The countenance of the cliff, as Johnny glanced aloft, was altering. Cracks appeared; dust pattered down in rivulets. The whole terrifying mass was slowly toppling forward.

Suddenly men were screaming, stumbling, running. A boulder landed with jarring force in the middle of the grade. Johnny saw a Chinese blindly roll his wheelbarrow off the cliff, fight for balance, and fall shrieking.

Chapter Fourteen

IN that instant, with the scream of the workman still in the air, he was able to stand there and look about him. He was the only man on the ground who did not appear to have a plan: Some ran a race with the rockslide, betting they could move a hundred feet in three seconds. But most of them crowded against the face of the cut, hands warding off the shale that rattled down upon them.

Just before the cliff was obscured in swirling veils of dust, one thing became clear: There was only one place on the ledge that would not, in five seconds, be covered with broken rock, and that was the boot-hole left by the blast.

Ed was gone, vanished somewhere. Johnny scrambled through the race of rock-fragments ricocheting from the foot of the bank. The boot-hole was a shallow cave about as deep as a saucer. He threw himself against the wall, flattening to its contour. He heard the mass of the slide roar down upon the roadbed and the men still trying to get clear of it. A thick, choking dust shut him in. Rocks were pelting him, but they were only the inner cataract of the slide. The voice of the avalanche was something he felt in his belly, a jarring roar that shook him. . . .

Suddenly it was over. A few more small boulders thudded onto the talus of wrecked granite. Then silence and horror claimed the field.

Almost the first thing Johnny heard when he climbed out and began searching along the wall, where men the cliff had protected were beginning to move, was Ed's voice:

"This proves it, kid. The Lord meant us for railroad men."

Ed, with Digory and four others, was pinned against the cliff by rubble up to his knees. But unlike the rest, the accident had marked him. His left arm hung awkwardly; blood was on him. His shirt was ripped away from a white, mangled shoulder, but he stood there patiently, as if afraid to try to move.

There were sounds of swearing, and down the tracks came Doc Cuvillie. He stopped to curse a gang of frightened Chinese; they stirred themselves and followed with shovels and crowbars.

Most of the large boulders had spilled over the cliff. In an hour the job of digging out was finished. Four of the men did not need Cuvillie's diagnosis to draw blankets instead of bandages. Of seven others, most had severe injuries. Ed was lucky; his collarbone was broken, and he had a bad cut on the shoulder, but he walked off the grade unassisted.

Cuvillie, convinced that every accident on the job happened mainly to inconvenience him personally, sourly gave Ed his orders.

"Bed for a week. No work for ten days. And if I catch you riding a horse before a month, you can damn' well doctor yourself." He stamped out.

Ed closed his eyes. Cuvillie's drugs had not quite obliterated the pain. "Fill me a pipe, Johnny," he murmured.

Johnny loaded his pipe and lighted it. Ed drew on the warm smoke. "Listen," he said. "If Babbie hears about this, somebody around here is going to have his ears cut off. You're still going up there, but you aren't going to tell her about the cave-in. Got that?"

"She's not a kid, Ed," Johnny grunted. "Any alibi I give her will be wasted breath."

Ed puffed on the pipe. "Tell her," he said, "that I had to go to Sacramento on business. That's logical, aint it?"

"About as logical as that you overate and didn't feel like making the ride."

"Just the same," Ed insisted, "you're going to try. She's having the time of her life. If she quit to take care of me, they might not take her back. How do you think I'd feel if—" He made an impatient gesture with the pipe, and then bit down on the stem of it.

Johnny stood up. "Okay, old-timer. I'll say my piece; but don't blame me if I come back with her trunk behind the saddle."

SO IT WAS JOHNNY who rode into Dutch Flat at sundown the following day.

The town was a rawboned settlement of hastily constructed frame buildings and a few red-brick structures thrown along crooked hillside streets. Summer dust was a foot deep. The miners breathed it with the air; they ate it with their food.

Placards posted before Odd Fellows' Hall advertised the entertainment. There was already a line, though it was an hour before the show was to start. Johnny had a steak at a short-order house, and walked down to the hall fifteen minutes before curtain-time.

The theater was full of Nevada-and-Oregon workers, brought over in wagons for the entertainment. Johnny's glance picked out big Ben Hedenburg. He had ceased to worry about Tim McKewen's threat, however, now that McKewen was dead. He did not think that Daggett, if the idea had been his, would care to pursue it further.

A piano began to work through the raucous audience noises. The split-curtain jerked open a few feet, and a lank, hungry-looking individual in a brown frock-coat and buff trousers appeared. He stood there with a stovepipe hat held carelessly in his hand.

In a stagey baritone he introduced himself and his troupe—Walter Garrett, no less, who hoped their poor offerings would please. The curtains parted, and a long minstrel act got under way. But none of the jokes alleviated the queasiness of Johnny's stomach.

Then a new poster was placed on the tripod. *"Miss Barbara Bly. Ballads Old and New."*

Johnny felt as though he had evaporated, all but his eyes and his pulse.

Miss Bly was attired in a gown of robin's-egg blue, from which a sprinkling of sequins threw back the glare of coal-oil footlights. Her accompanist sat at a weathered piano, the same lean, lank-haired man who had opened the show.

Miss Bly sang in a light voice, a golden voice, an unspoiled voice. She sang easily, but never with great volume, so that the house was hushed to every note.

Someone called for "Annie Laurie," and a lump came into Johnny's throat. She used to sing it in the evenings, when wood-smoke made the early darkness fragrant, and all the harsh sounds of railroading were stilled. The song carried him back; it was a sharp wrench to hear her voice die away. She sang two more numbers, and then a couple of black-face comedians came on.

But for Johnny the show was over.

Afterward, he went backstage. Babbie let him into her dressing-room, modestly leaving the door open. Seated before a cracked mirror, she removed the stage make-up which had almost shocked Johnny when he saw her up close. He felt a little backwash of relief as she wiped the last of it off and applied just a suspicion of color to her lips and cheeks.

"You were great, Babbie," he told her. "Some change from singing for a couple of hundred rust-eaters, isn't it?"

"It's a change, all right. I'm not sure it's so much better." She arranged her gown carefully in the top of the trunk. "The main difference is that I get paid for it. But when they pay, they get the idea, sometimes, that they've bought the right to make cat-calls too."

The mere notion of it whipped the blood hotly to Johnny's head. "Anybody make any cat-calls tonight?"

Babbie smiled. "Thanks just the same, Johnny. I don't need a champion, really; I just stop singing and stare at them, and they stop. Anyway, it's a great life for a tumbleweed. I haven't slept three nights in the same town since I left the railroad."

Suddenly she straightened from the trunk. "Where in the world is Pop? Didn't he come up?"

Johnny didn't trust his eyes. He began stuffing tobacco into his pipe. "Ed sent his best. Danged if he didn't get a wire to go to Sacramento this morning!"

BABBIE'S EYES continued to search his face. She came over and took him by the ears so that he had to look at her. "Pop's sick!" she said.

Johnny sighed. "I told him it was no use trying to alibi for him. The fact is, we had a little rock-slide just after you left. Nothing to get excited about! Only he had a collarbone broken, and he'll have to take it easy for a few days."

Babbie closed her eyes; two tears squeezed through. "Poor Pop! Every time it's something—a broken arm or a twisted ankle—just so he won't forget he's working on a railroad." She said: "Can you get a wagon to take me and my trunk over?"

"That," Johnny declared, "is just what I'm *not* going to do. Ed's all right! He made me lie for him, because he knew you'd throw over your job and come down to cry over the body. Cuvillie's going to let him get up in a week, anyway."

"Then who's going to do for him while his shoulder's still out of whack?"

Johnny held her hands. "Can't you see it, Babbie? The last thing he wants is for you to come back to the iron, feeling the way you do. Give him a break. You'll only make him feel like an old woman."

Babbie's chin lifted. "You talk such a good case I wonder whether it's you or Pop that's afraid I'll come back—"

"It's both of us," Johnny said grimly. "I'm still trying to stay on the iron standard. And having you around scrambles my values."

She said something strange, then. She said, on a kind of sigh: "That's nice, Johnny. That's like having a poem dedicated to you. You're somebody special, even if you are a railroad man. Maybe if I could scramble your values completely, we'd both be happier. . . . But right now, I want you to carry my trunk out and get a wagon."

She pushed him out of the room. But Johnny's mind was wildly pulling petals as he went in search of a horse and wagon. When he came back, he heard her talking with Walter Garrett in the back of the hall. Apparently there was some unpleasantness over her leaving.

"I don't know why we had to come down here, anyway!" Garrett was storming. "There weren't enough towns where we were—we had to travel seventy-five miles just to play this misbegotten offscraping of the Mother Lode!"

"I just thought," Babbie said quietly, "that we'd have some good houses over here."

Garrett said slyly: "And perhaps you just thought you might see your young friend of the railroad, eh?"

"What 'young friend,' Mr. Garrett?" Babbie asked.

"*What* young friend! Young woman, when someone your age subscribes to all the Sacramento newspapers to see how many miles of track a certain railroad has laid each week, it is a safe guess that she is not particularly interested in traffic receipts."

"It happens," Babbie declared sharply, "that my father is building railroad. Or at least helping." She said: "I'll try to join you at Nevada City next week. If I'm not there, you'd better not wait."

Walter Garrett declaimed in his heaviest stage-voice: "Be assured, Miss Carney, we shall not!"

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

JOHNNY moved his gear from the chief engineer's car back to his musty boxcar. It was not entirely a happy transaction, exchanging the bright if rumpled shanty-car for the windowless gloom of his own quarters; but in his own heart there burned a small lamp that had almost gone out.

He had built up quite a case for himself. Maybe she wouldn't leave again! Maybe, if she stayed around long enough, the ring he had bought in San Francisco would be disinterred from its velvet casket.

But in the morning, when the yellow sun sliced every furtive shred of romanticism from the camp, he realized how puny was the evidence on which his case had been built: A girl's subscribing to a newspaper! Maybe she liked to read the ads. His common sense dismissed the case for lack of evidence.

He was busy all morning. At noon he dropped in on Ed. The car was foggy with dust. Babbie, her hair up in a bandana, sleeves to her elbows, was making war with broom and dustpan. The magic odors of mulligan stew were in the air; Johnny did not cavil when Babbie said casually: "You might as well stay for dinner. You may set the table, if you want."

After dinner he talked to Ed. "I'm riding up to get a line on Daggett," he said. "Take your eyes off him for five minutes, and he's putting a frog down your neck."

Babbie removed her apron. "I'll go with you," she announced. "I want to see just what makes this Cape Horn proposition so tough."

At the corral, Johnny saddled his horse and selected a pony for Babbie. She ran down the path presently in denim pants with turned-up cuffs, and a plaid shirt. In the rude glare of the sunlight, Johnny saw that the months away from the road had stolen her tan. But in a way, it made her all the prettier. There was certainly nothing wrong, to his mind, with gray eyes and red lips set off by fair skin.

They followed the work-road along the curving cap of the cliff. A summer-day haze softened the sharpness of objects at the bottom of the cañon. Babbie stopped once and pointed down. "How are you going to cross that side-ravine?"

"A bridge, temporarily," Johnny told her. "Then we'll fill with rock."

After they started on, she said: "It seems as though you ought to be working on it, then. You'll catch up and have to wait on the B. and B. outfit."

"Maybe you're right," Johnny said. But when he glanced at her with a shade of amusement, she was looking straight ahead.

From a hogback they could see that the Nevada and Oregon had brought its rails over the crest of the mesa. A trestle was being thrown up to bridge Robber's Ravine. At the near end, timbers were being set in the hillside which, a mile farther on, swung into Cape Horn. Babbie scanned it through his binoculars. She did not comment when she returned them.

Halfway back, she declared suddenly: "You know you can't do it, don't you?"

Johnny stared at her. "If you mean shut him out," he retorted, "we can, and we're going to."

Her eyes regarded him coolly. "You can build across Cape Horn, Johnny, because you can do anything you really set out to. I wouldn't call it genius, exactly: It seems to have more to do with butting your head against the bricks until they fall. But you're going to fight Jim Daggett pretty soon—not a mountain. And I don't see any blueprints for *that* fight."

"What do you want—the Horse Marines?"

"Daggett is exactly the same kind you are—that's the trouble. He's about as easy to reason with as a badger. His answer to your refusal to cut him in on the Central was to stop you cold. And I don't see that you've offered him much of an answer."

"I'll do my debating the next time we meet."

"Sure," Babbie sniffed. "You'll steamroller right over him. But the fact is that he has five hundred white workmen to your hundred and fifty. And don't expect the Chinese to go to war for you."

"We'll bore that tunnel when we come to it," Johnny declared grumpily.

Babbie gave him an amused glance. She had maneuvered him into a corner, and she knew it. It was something Johnny hadn't let himself worry about, but nevertheless it had been there at the back of his mind, fretting him. He could conceive of only one kind of argument with Daggett next time—a head-on collision.

There was a prize-fighter's axiom to the effect that a good big man could always lick a good little man. Johnny Duff knew that when time was called for this showdown fight, he was the one who would come out of the little man's corner.

THE STUBBORN FIBER of the Horn gave them a few feet a day. They could scheme and plan, but when a charge was shot, no amount of oil burned in the engineering cars would make the boot-hole any larger.

Behind end-of-track mounted a vast pile of material. The moral rot of inactivity invaded the boarding-cars. Liquor was being smuggled in; gambling became the heaviest work that ninety per cent of the men indulged in. Fights were constant. Every check showed another dozen white workers missing, as the quartz and hydraulic mines drew off disgusted workmen.

But there was work now only for the powder-men and a handful of muckers. For a while Johnny kept the others busy clearing brush and stacking supplies. Then these jobs petered out, and there was nothing to do but pay them to vegetate.

Often, now, they could hear the blasting from Daggett's camp. In a week he was attacking Cape Horn itself. The trail his graders cut was barely wide enough even for his narrow-gauge track; but it was wide enough to establish a claim. Between the two sweating armies of railroad workers there now lay a quarter-mile of granite.

Among the engineers and foremen there was little talk. They knew what was ahead, and Johnny knew they were trying to decide whether or not to stick. But of his worries, this was the least: If they were worth the name of railroad men, they would stay with the road to which they had sworn allegiance. So Johnny did not worry. But one morning he had a rude surprise from the Chinese side of the camp.

You could be around the Orientals for years and never quite understand them. Language itself threw a smoke-screen around them. It was staggering to stare across the tracks that morning and discover the long aisles of gray canvas tents deserted. . . .

A riding-boss brought the first word. Not a man of his gang had shown up! When he rode over to hunt them, he discovered only a few score Chinese drifting around. Fifteen hundred workmen had deserted during the night! Johnny rounded up the others and grilled them. An interpreter told the story.

A big man with a black beard had appeared the night before from the N. & O. camp, telling a story of fifty dollars a month wages—pay whether a man was sick or well; short hours, easy work, and money could be drawn every night, if a man desired. During the night, silently, they packed their small belongings and departed. The ones who stayed with the Central were either old, sick, or lazy, content with their thirty-five dollars as long as they did not have to work for it.

In a sort of mental paralysis, Johnny walked back and told Ed and Babbie.

"There goes our railroad!" Ed groaned.

Johnny was thinking way back, remembering a man who had entrusted a dream to him. He had tried to keep that dream bright; but somehow the tarnish had come, and now you could hardly see the dream for the blunders he had made. Where had he failed? He did not know. He had failed only in not being equal to the trust.

There was not even the satisfaction of thinking that the road would still be built, even if the C. P. didn't build it. Jim Daggett was a schemer, not a builder. He would build for what there was in it for him; and in the road he planned to construct, across the impossible Johnson Pass route, there was only ruin.

Babbie had deserted her dishes. "Well, what's the answer?" she demanded.

Johnny looked at her; not resentfully, but wearily. "You make a guess. I've been guessing wrong ever since Judah died."

She looked astounded. "You're not giving up!"

"All I know about railroad-building," said Johnny, "is that you keep on laying ties until you connect somewhere, and somebody tells you you're finished. As long as I've got my Cousin Jacks, I'm still in the railroad business."

For a girl who hated railroading, Babbie Carney betrayed violent agitation. She walked back to the sink and dried another dish, and then threw the towel down. "I don't know why you can't hike over there and hire them back! You can *promise* sixty a month, can't you, even if the Big Four don't approve it?"

"But we can't pay them every night the way Daggett can," Ed pointed out.

"But for a week or two! That's all it will be, isn't it?"

Johnny shook his head. "Even for a week."

Babbie turned away without answering.

JOHNNY LEFT. He heard her voice through the window: "This place is like a graveyard! I wish somebody'd set off a charge or something—"

Presently she came after him. "I thought you might saddle a horse for me," she said. "I'll go crazy sitting around here if I don't get away for a while."

They walked to the horse corral. "You can always go back to Garrett," Johnny remarked. "Come to think of it, your time's about up with him anyway, isn't it?"

"I'm through with Garrett. Traveling around like that is fun for a while; but I'll go down to San Francisco when I'm ready to go back. And Pop isn't really able to do for himself yet, anyway."

Johnny cut out a pony for her. Babbie walked over to a tool-shed, and just as he was finishing, she returned with a shovel and an iron skillet. She colored under his frowning stare.

"Well, I might as well be panning gravel as doing nothing," she defended. "The miners say you can still make five dollars a day almost anywhere with a shovel and a pan. It's only an hour down to the river."

Johnny watched her ride off, with an uneasy feeling that he had been given, if not an alibi, at least a half-truth. . . .

The day lagged. The few remaining Chinese were put to work mucking. The white men, all of them specialists, lay in the shade, smoked in the cars, drifted off toward Colfax to the saloons. It was mid-afternoon when Babbie came back, but when she returned, there was not a man in camp who did not know about it.

They could hear the horse running up the grade; and then, as she pulled in, the cry went up and down the line.

"Gold, Johnny! Gold! The river's full of it! I panned that much in an hour!" She held up a small bottle that had once held vanilla extract, but which was now a quarter full of what, even at a glance, was obviously coarse gold.

Chapter Sixteen

THE sleepy boarding-cars began to disgorge wild-eyed Irishmen. The sixty or seventy Chinese still in camp ran insanely about, hunting shovels and pans, screaming the news. In five minutes a trail of blue-pajamaed workmen was streaming up over the hill toward the river trail.

Cornishmen were running back to learn what had happened. At the tool-sheds, white workers fought over picks and shovels. And Johnny Duff caught the bottle of gold dust Babbie tossed him and ran his fingers through his hair. He looked at it; then he frowned and stared at her.

The gold was about two-thirds sand. The color was too coppery to be pure gold.

Then he felt Babbie's grip on his arm. "Stop them, Johnny!" she cried. "Let the Chinese go; *but stop the white men!* With a gun if you have to—"

Johnny was too sandbagged to move. "Don't you see?" Babbie whispered. "I filed some old jewelry up and mixed it with sand. We had to steal Daggett's men somehow! Those men will pass within a quarter of a mile of the N. & O. camp on the way to the river. Daggett won't have a dozen men by tonight. But we've got to see that *we* do!"

Johnny was looking at Babbie, but he was seeing through her, and beyond her. He was seeing a chance to regain what he had thought was lost; and he knew that Babbie had given it to him.

He caught her with an arm about her waist; he felt her body yield. But in this moment there was nothing to say; nothing to do but hold her tightly, her face against his neck, and not ask himself how much of what he saw in her eyes was true, but to accept it.

The urgency of the moment brought him back. He released her, and as he hesitated, she pushed him toward the boarding-cars. "Go build that railroad, Johnny!" she said.

Johnny did not fool himself that anything but force would stop these men who were on their way, so they thought, to riches. The first man to reach the corral, shovels at shoulder-arms and pots, pans and skillets banging, found him seated on the large stone beside the gate.

"What's the hurry, boys?" he asked mildly.

Clancy, the rail foreman, eyed his carbine. They all stopped behind him. Clancy growled, "There's enough for all of us, Super'ntendent. But if we don't highball it, them Chinks is going to stake out everything in sight."

Johnny shook his head. "The truth of it, Clancy, is that there isn't enough for any of us. That was a mean trick of Miss Carney's. But I'll defend the intention." He threw the bottle at Clancy's feet. "That's the gold she 'panned,' boys."

Clancy stared at him, picked up the bottle and poured the contents on his palm. His thumb and forefinger tested it. Then he gaped at the others. "Sand and filin's!" he grunted. "And not more'n ten-carat filin's at that. . . . Duff," he said, grimly, "I hope there's a good reason for this. It'd be the first time I ever quit a construction job if there aint."

Then Johnny told them—them and the others beginning to collect about the corral. He told about Babbie's trick, and then he began to talk railroad—and there was nobody in California, now that Judah was dead, who could talk railroad like Johnny Duff. When he got through, when his dreams and his heartbreaks were reflected in the sentimental Irish faces, he stood up.

"So that's how it is, boys: Jim Daggett has lost the first hand in six months. You can help me rake in the blue chips if you're interested in saving the best damned railroad in the nation—and earning fifty dollars' bonus per man!"

Clancy glanced around at the others, and no heads shook. They shifted and cleared their throats, but in the awkward way of inarticulate men they waited for someone else to do the talking. Thus it fell upon Clancy to accept.

"It's plain what they'll be sayin'," he declared. "'The Irish built the U. P., and the Chinks built the Central.' But we're your men, Mr. Duff."

IT WAS DECIDED TO WAIT UNTIL DARK.

As dusk merged into the big star-frosted mountain night, Johnny found himself in a fit of nerves. All the diffused forces of the last two years had suddenly become focused upon the hour ahead. He sat in the pallid filter of camp-light coming through his door, wiping his carbine with a dry rag. Daggett might fight, or he might not. But Johnny was going prepared.

Someone approached the car. Ed said: "It's about time, Johnny!"

Johnny stood up. "Kind of rushed, aren't you, for somebody that's not going?"

"Who says I aint? Clancy's saddling my horse right now."

"Babbie'll scalp you!"

"Don't let her fool you," Ed chuckled. "She sent me! I was a few months off on my guess, but she's back to stay. Maybe she don't know it yet; but she's been rearranging furniture and washin' curtains like a new bride. When she aint doing that, she's standing in the door sniffin' the smoke like it was night-bloomin' jasmine!"

They walked down to the corral. Most of the horses were under saddle. The pipe-smoke of half a hundred rust-eaters came to them from where the workmen sat on the hillside, waiting with pick-helves, crowbars and scantlings. Digory was on hand with his Cousin Jacks.

In the darkness the creak of twenty saddles was a warm and strong commotion. The men without horses made a great, hearty racket as they strung into line behind the riders, joking and swearing and throwing their weapons onto their shoulders.

If he'd ever needed a testimonial that he was in the right trade, Johnny thought, he had it now. It was in

the downright way these men accepted the fact that they would fight for him, simply because they were needed. When they hired their bodies to a railroad, they didn't lock their loyalty in a vault.

By the mesa trail it was a half-mile to the Nevada and Oregon camp. The tents and stock-piles had been brought forward to the north side of Robber's Ravine. Just what he had expected, Johnny did not know, but the silence was what struck him as they drew near the camp. A yellow slice of moon gave just enough light to show the gaunt trestle bridging the ravine. They reached the tracks and peered down the converging streaks of iron to the camp two hundred yards ahead, on the hillside. Not a pin-prick of light showed.

He swung down. The others followed suit. They started cautiously ahead. Out of the darkness came the shapes of tie-piles and long ranks of rails. A city of tents ascended the slope into darkness; but there were no supper-fires tonight, no sounds of gabbling Chinese taking their evening meal.

Up the line a string of flatcars lay along the curve behind a narrow-gauge engine with its vast diamond stack; and as they advanced, the soft glow of the firebox surged softly against the ballast. Something about it all was not right: The supply-train should not be here at all, at night —with the piles of ties still unloaded.

Johnny turned back. He said: "Have your men start tearing up rails, Clancy. We'll see what can be done with a few tons of powder."

Then, like the throb of a war-drum, rifle-fire broke from the flatcars.

The volley was shattering—a concerted crash of musketry that tore the silence raggedly, a hail of balled lead that funneled upon the small group on the tracks. Winking spurts of fire stuttered from the close-stacked ties, running the full length of the train.

For an instant Johnny's army was stricken with paralysis. Then with one motive the whole group broke, running, crawling, to shelter. For most of them, that meant the brush. Others piled over the bank into the ravine. Johnny and Ed hit the brush. The fire kept up for half a minute, raking up and down the right of way, as, one after another, the flatcars came into action.

Through loops in the thick walls of ties, the Dutch Flat men, probably all the workmen Daggett had been able to save, laid down a fire that kept the unarmed Central Pacific men on the ground.

Then the shooting stopped. They could hear a man groaning near by.

Ed stood at Johnny's elbow. "How's the book read now?" he asked.

Johnny clutched the carbine so tight his knuckles ached. He knew he had not more than a dozen men with guns, and every one of those flatcars was a blockhouse to be stormed and taken.

Suddenly the flare from the firebox brightened. The locomotive puffed windily, and began to back down the tracks toward them, caboose first. Ed said hurriedly: "Mister, I don't know just what we thought we were going to do, but we're going to get the hell out of here!"

"No!" Johnny said it without knowing what he could offer them, beyond the chance to be cut to pieces by Daggett's mobile fortresses. But he knew that he had been granted one night in which to achieve what he had failed to do in two years, and he was not throwing it away.

"They've got us, Johnny!" Ed argued. "It won't buy anything to have the boys hunted down like jackrabbits. Let's get out of here."

JOHNNY FOUND IT THEN—found it the way he had discovered escape from the alley that night in San Francisco. It was as though, maybe, Mr. Judah hadn't deserted his railroad after all, but was standing behind Johnny, whispering in his ear. And what he was talking about was so simple he chuckled.

"Take charge of the platoon, corporal!" he said. "When that hog goes by, there isn't going to be much shooting done!"

He crowded out of the brush. In the darkness he ran up the line toward the train. Someone saw him, and a rifle roared. He heard the ball strike the ground behind him. A couple of guns farther up the line took up the hunt, but the cars were joggling too much for accuracy. Johnny had his eye on a pile of ties a hundred feet ahead. The caboose of the train was almost even with it.

Before he won the safety of the stacked timbers, the shots were coming at him too closely for comfort. He got the ties between him and the tracks, then. He moved to the far end of the stack and watched the caboose move past, then the slow procession of flats. He could see into the cab of the locomotive as it neared him. The fire-door was open, and someone was throwing in chunk-wood. The engineer was silhouetted at the door.

At the last second, Johnny walked to the track and caught the grab-irons. He went into the cab with his carbine preceding him. The engineer was unarmed, but Johnny was in a hurry and in no mood to take chances: He planted a boot in the man's belly and watched him reel backward out the door. He took time to horse the throttle wide open. The fireman realized, as the drivers spun, what was going on. He whirled from the fire-door. There was a gun stuck under his belt, and he drew it as he turned; and in the same instant Johnny knew it was Ben Hedenburg.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

HE shouted a warning, but Hedenburg's thumb was on the hammer of the Colt, and a savagery like madness was in the man's eyes. Johnny fired. Hedenburg faltered, but the hammer fell. The ball shattered the glass behind Johnny's head. Johnny closed with him, and knew again the horror he had known the night he was forced to shoot Kearns, in that musty little room in Hedenburg's saloon. For Hedenburg's body was loose and unresponding; he swayed against Johnny, beard rough against his face. Johnny twisted the gun out of his hand and thrust him away. Hedenburg backed off, teetering on the platform for a moment. Then one foot dropped down the step, throwing him off balance; he went down, his hands clutching flaccidly at the greasy wooden floor. All at once he sprawled away into the darkness.

The locomotive's drivers slipped on the new rails: Johnny shot her some sand. The cars began to gather speed. When they passed the brush where the men were hiding, the speed was a good twenty miles an hour. Under the wheels the track was rough, mined with blind sags that tried every bolt. Johnny heard shouts beyond the tender. He pulled down a tier of wood and began to heave it into the firebox.

The solid click of the rails altered. They boomed across the Robber's Ravine trestle and pounded out upon the mesa. There was a mile of nearly straight track, and then the long, winding fall to the cañon of the American River began. The little four-four-oh was clicking off more knots than a narrow-gauge locomotive was ever designed to. Couplings yanked; the floor under Johnny's feet bounded. It was about time, he decided, to bail out. He found a maul in the tool-box under the engineer's seat and put the throttle out of commission.

He heard wood sliding down the tender. He pivoted, and stopped dead. He had almost forgotten Silver Jim Daggett in the last few hectic minutes. But it was the

Nevadan who stood on the buffer between the cars, fighting the sway. In the flare of the fire, his face was harshly shadowed, the channels that bracketed his mouth deeper than ever, his eyes older, narrow and dull.

He carried a long-barreled Navy Colt in his hand. Johnny's stomach muscles cramped under the scrutiny of that round black eye, for his carbine was empty, and it was a long reach to his revolver. He stood there, awaiting the impact of the slug. . . .

Instead, he heard Daggett's voice, over the clatter of the trucks:

"I've never killed a man before, Duff. But I will tonight, unless you throw down that gun and back out—"

Johnny dropped the gun and took a step back. He felt the Johnson-bar prod his shoulder-blades. Daggett came into the cab, and Johnny grinned: "I've been thinking it over, Daggett. Maybe I'll take that job you offered me after all."

The grim line of Daggett's mouth said it wasn't funny. He made a quick gesture with the revolver. "I'm telling you to jump. I mean *now!*"

Johnny thought of a lot of things: of Babbie; of the heart-warming bustle of camp on a frosty morning, when the steam from the supply-train was as pink as striped candy; of the masculine smells of wood-smoke and freshly-graded earth—all things he loved, and didn't want to lose; but the next ten seconds might take them from him forever; because what Daggett was asking was not what he intended to do.

Daggett's face contorted as Johnny continued to stand there; he was at the extreme of his nervous endurance. The gun-barrel trembled.

And Johnny's shoulder moved against the Johnson-bar.

A lot of things happened as the drivers tried to go into reverse. Wood thudded down in the tender. Daggett sprawled backward and sat down. Johnny was hurled across the car, where he struck the wall and fell. He was up again, scrambling after Daggett. Daggett, lying in the tumbled blocks of wood, fired as he came on. The bullet tugged at Johnny's coat.

In a battle like this, there were no such things as ethics: Johnny's boot connected with Daggett's jaw. The mining-man fell back. Johnny took his gun and swung back to the controls, as Daggett fumbled about, half-conscious. Heavily, he horsed the Johnson-bar over. The locomotive ceased shuddering and settled down to a gallop. With the maul, Johnny locked it permanently in place.

For a few seconds he stood on the step, looking for a soft spot in the dark blur of brush and rocks. He gave up, took a deep breath and stepped into the rushing darkness. He took three bounding strides, and the ground slapped him. . . .

He lay there only a few seconds. He came up groggy. There was blood and gravel all down one side of his face and arm. He could hear the train rushing down the grade, hanging blindly to the jerry-built track.

It seemed much later that the sounds changed. There was a tearing crash, and then for an instant there was no sound at all. Flame burst from the mountainside, cascaded down the steep banks toward the river. The sound of the wreck was a far-away thunder that built to a climax, and then subsided.

In the cañon of the American River, there was silence.

It was a four-mile hike back to camp. Before he had covered a mile, he saw a flush of light along the mesa. The turns of the track brought him to where he could see the flames: The trestle at Robber's Ravine was on fire. Farther along, stacks of ties were going up. Presently a rush of flame sheeted up the barren hillside, and Johnny knew the tents were gone. When the workmen came back tomorrow, they would come back to desolation. There would be a lot of contrite and sheepish rust-eaters hunting work in a day or two—

He was thankful when the rattle of shod hoofs came down the hill to him. Ed and four other men came along, riding high and hunting trouble. They wheeled when they saw Johnny. But he called out to them, and Ed spurred to his side. He mounted behind Ed, and they started back.

No one had to ask questions. They all knew that what they had come to do had been done. It was not the kind of thing that made a man want to brag, but probably their minds were all running the way Ed's was when he said, sniffing the weather:

"I reckon we can count on another two months before frost. It might be a good idea if we established a camp at Donner Pass and got things under way there. These slow-ups look like hell on a report."

In the chief engineer's car, lamps burned yellow behind the windows. The door opened, and Babbie stood silhouetted with a hand to her cheek. A lump came into Johnny's throat: She was so courageous, so fine, so far above what any railroad man could offer. Once he had said there could be no compromise with his work; but tonight he knew there must be.

They went into the heart-warming atmosphere of frying doughnuts. Johnny had no opportunity to speak until Ed ducked out to see if he could rustle up whisky rations for some men who had earned them. Then, reaching across the gingham-covered table, Johnny captured her hands.

"I've still got that ring," he said.

Babbie's eyes caught the golden luster of the lamps. She said: "You won't have it long, darling."

"Babbie," Johnny said, "I know the road is no place for a woman. But if you could stand it six months out of the year, I'd take a job in town the other six."

Babbie came around and sat on his lap. She held his face in her hands and kissed him lightly on the mouth. "Don't you know yet," she said, "that Pop was only an excuse for me to come back? In the first place, there's no fun in singing to anybody but you and Pop, anyway. And besides—well, all you have to do to appreciate a thing is to do without it for a while. I don't ever want to be out of the sound of a train-whistle again as long as I live! I'll take the dust and melted butter if I have to; but there's rust in my heart—and it's wonderful!"

High in the Sierra Nevadas, where the magnificent shoulders of the Donner Pass hold up the sky, there is a tie-siding called simply, "Barbara Bly." It is all that remains of the girl who sang to the mining-camps of the Mother Lode.

But Babbie Duff was with the Central Pacific when the ties stepped down the mountains into Nevada, crossed the desert to Salt Lake City—just a few days before the Union Pacific would have made it, and on to Panorama Point, where the East and West were finally fused. There were some real railroad men on the U. P., God rest them; but there weren't two Theodore Judahs in the country to leave their memories as an inspiration.

Probably there weren't two homes like Babbie's, either. It had wheels, of course. It had windows—lots of them. It had rugs, and a bathtub which folded into a closet, and other things even a city woman wouldn't have sniffed at. It wasn't long before the big bedroom had to be cut up into two rooms; and that wasn't the end of it, either. Before the Duff family was all tallied in, a second car traveled with Johnny and Babbie when they were out on a job.

It got so the Brotherhood didn't say a certain railroad was built by John Duff. A hoghead would declare cheerfully, "You don't have to worry about the grades on that road, Mister. It was built, by God, by the Duffs!"

Who's Who *in this* Issue

Laurence Kirk

HIS real name is Eric Andrew Simson, and he was born in Edinburgh, 1895, of Scottish parents. Educated Wellington College. Won classical scholarship Magdalen College Oxford, 1914, but never went into residence, owing to First World War. Served in France and Belgium 1914-1916 as lieutenant of artillery, then transferred to Flying Corps and was trained as pilot. Served as pilot 1917-1918, mainly as instructor. Awarded Air Force Cross.

Served in Colonial Office, Middle East Department, 1920-1923, then started to travel and write. First English publication was a short story in *The English Review*, in 1925. First American short story appeared in *Harper's Magazine*, 1931. Published eight novels, two of which have been filmed.

Rejoined RAF as Pilot Officer in May 1939, reached the rank of Wing Commander in fifteen months and served in that rank until June 1945. Did no writing during this period: there was not time. "The Rocket and the Ricochet" is the first short story written since starting again. "Know nothing about rockets from the departure end," he says, "but well acquainted with them from the arrival end. Dislike rockets."

Married 1929 Stella, actress, sister of F. Tennyson Jesse, author. Wife died in 1942. (Since the above was written Eric Simson has been made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire, in recognition of his services with the RAF.)

John McDermott

BORN in Pueblo, Colorado, twenty-six years ago; have lived mostly in Los Angeles, Calif.

Started drawing at the age of three (they tell me); have been at it ever since with some small improvement.

Went to work at Walt Disney's out of high school, then one year at Columbia studio while debating whether to join the Marine Corps.

Enlisted September, '42; went overseas the following February and got back thirty months later. During that time I did duty as a Marine Combat artist and saw the Guam and Okinawa campaigns.

Now working as a free lance artist in New York—and friend wife and I are considered geniuses because we have found an apartment to live in.

Photo by Harris & Ewing

Thomas M. Johnson

Lt. William J. Horrigan

Sgt. John McDermott—from a snapshot taken during the battle for Naha. Damage to film obscures shell-burst in background.

Thomas M. Johnson

BORN June 20, 1889, Buffalo, N. Y. Hobart College, A.B., 1913. Editorial staff, New York *Sun*, 1914-'21. Accredited Correspondent, A.E.F., France from beginning to Rhine, covering all engagements. Peace Conference, Paris, 1919. Foreign Editor, N. Y. *Sun*, then public relations work, 1922-'25.

From 1925, writer—newspapers, magazines, books. For NEA Service, articles on various subjects, though mainly foreign and military affairs; covered Army maneuvers before and during World War II; War and Navy Depts., Washington; Panama and other Latin-American points. Since 1939, Military Writer for NEA and for various magazines, including *Reader's Digest, Saturday Evening Post, Collier's, Liberty, This Week, American Mercury, American Legion Magazine.*

Author or co-author of following books: "Without Censor: New Light on Our Greatest World War Battles, 1928"; "Our Secret War; True American Spy Stories"—published also in England, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, 1929; "Unlocking Adventure," 1942. Co-author, "Red War" (Judson P. Philips) 1936; "The Lost Battalion," (Fletcher Pratt) 1938; "What You Should Know About Spies and Saboteurs" (Will Irwin) 1943.

Member Authors' League of America, Academy of Political Science, Overseas Press Club of America (Board of Directors); National Press Club (Washn.); Military Intelligence Reserve Society; American Military Institute, Society of the First Division, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Americans United for World Organization, United Nations Association.

William J. Horrigan

LIEUTENANT, U.S.N.R., and New York attorney. Served in North Africa, Italy, India, Burma, Thailand. Only naval officer qualified as British and American parachutist and awarded submarine combat insignia. Holds combat Legion of Merit.

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